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JUNE 1986 A MONTHLY REVIEW EDITED BY R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.

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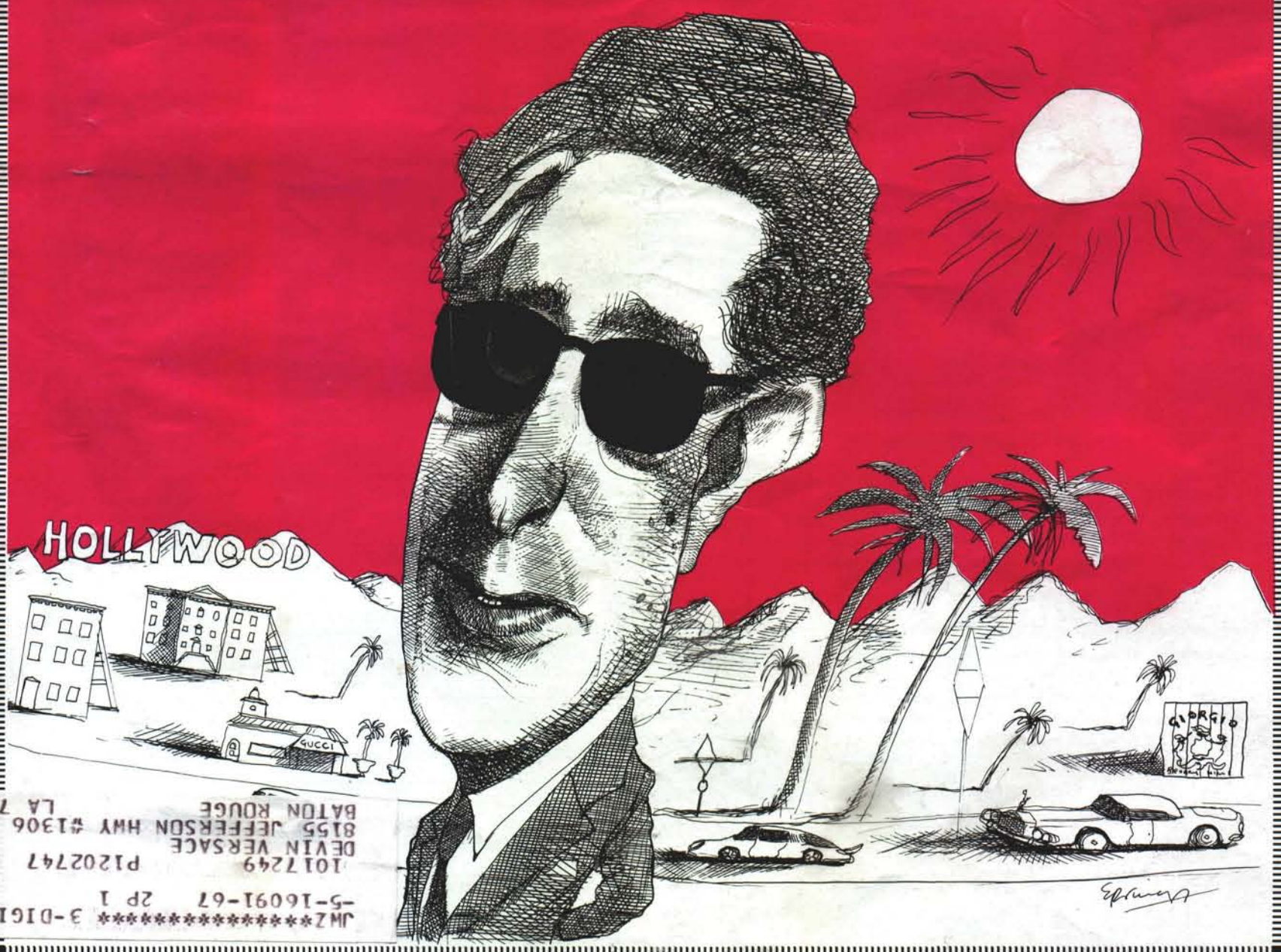
Tom Bethell Goes to Russia

Ben Stein in the Sunshine, by Mark Falcoff



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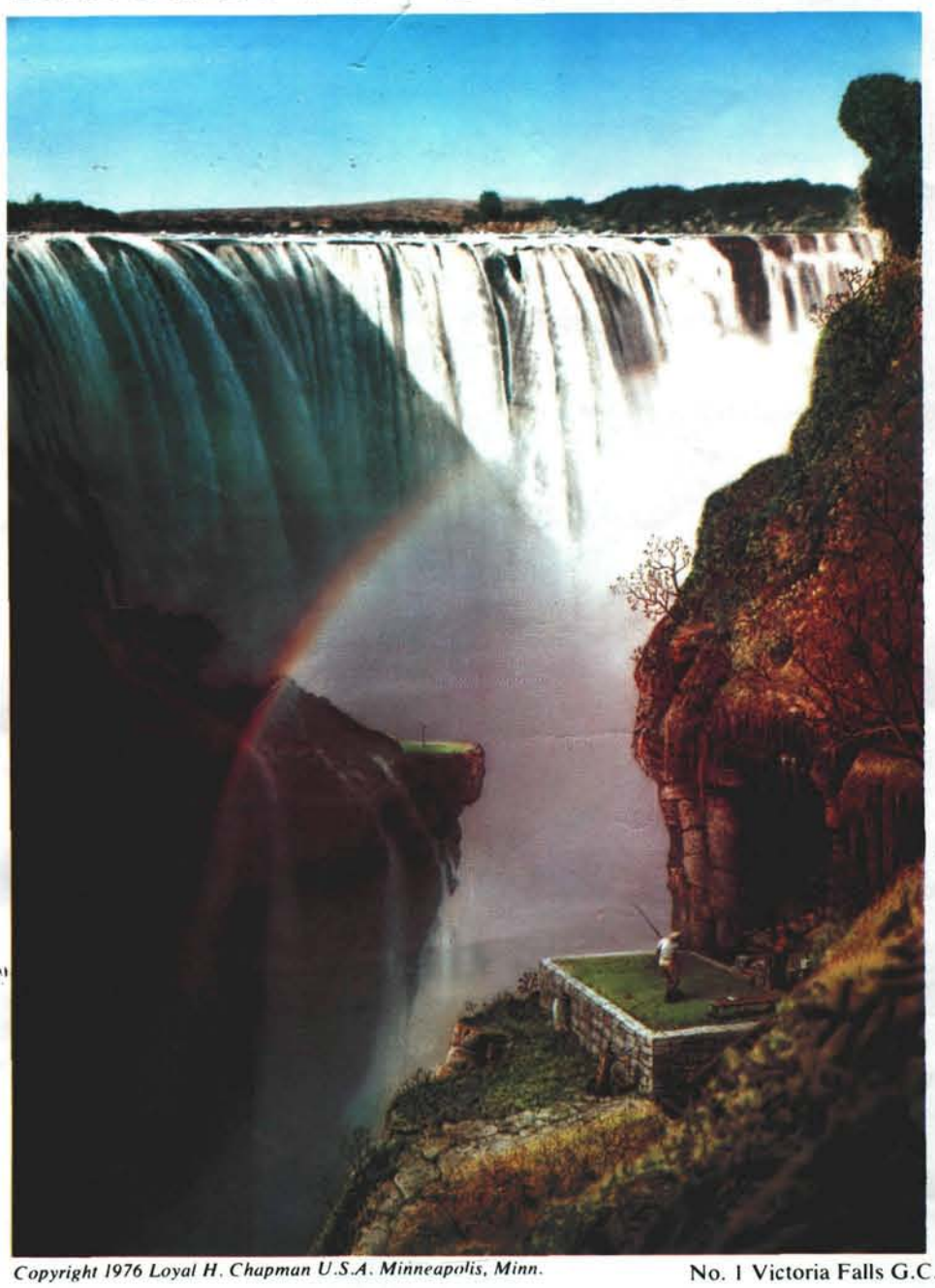

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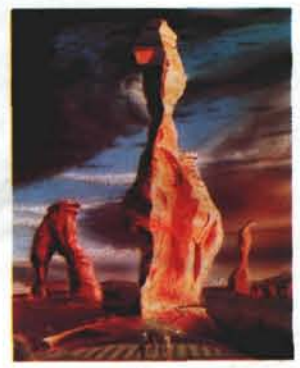

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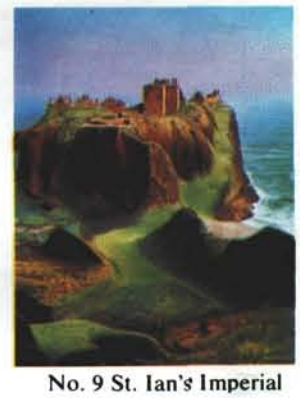

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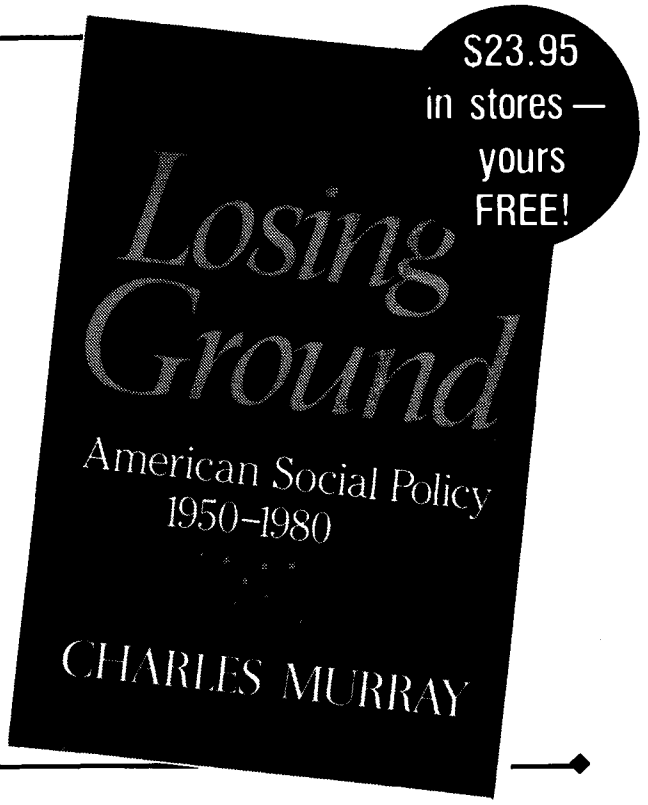
"Murray...has finally and unanswerably demolished both the moral and the practical claims of the welfare state"

—GEORGE GILDER, *The American Spectator*



This breakthrough book is making conservatives purr and liberals squirm . . .

"Murray's book, relentlessly logical and well-documented, should convince any serious reader that it must at least be squarely faced. . . . The heart of the book, the best and most devastating part, is a long compilation of data meant to prove that the poor have done worse as government programs aimed at them have flowered. It is especially uncomfortable reading because the case is made by comparing blacks to whites. . . . No doubt that racists will love Murray's book. So what? When millions of people are suffering, it seems irresponsible for the left to expend its intellectual energies on these blame-shifting exercises. . . . his is a vision that coheres, as the left's on this subject doesn't any more. . . . This is the problem that liberals must address; Murray's book in effect throws down the gauntlet to them. The standard responses (most of which Murray neatly sets up and demolishes) won't do, because they don't offer real hope of a solution."—*New Republic*

"Irrefutable."—John Chamberlain, syndicated column

"Without bile and without rhetoric, it lays out a stark truth that must be faced."—*Business Week*

"Devastating. . . . Those who already believe welfare is a poverty trap that undermines independence, ambition, and upward mobility will find Charles Murray's new book a powerful and well-documented affirmation of that belief."—*National Review*

"A great book. Others have recently made the same argument. . . . But Charles Murray's version . . . is particularly convincing. He writes with flair, but his tone is steadfastly nonpartisan; he marshals an immense amount of data . . . but never loses the reader in numbers; and he never ventures a conclusion for which he has not laid the most elaborate and convincing groundwork. . . . By the time Mr. Murray gets around to conclusions, even devotedly non-Reaganite yuppies will be ready to agree. . . . James Coleman, the University of Chicago sociologist, is quoted on the dust jacket . . . as saying 'future discussions of social policy cannot proceed without taking the arguments and evidence of this book into account.' Dust-jacket puffery is notorious, but in this case the compliment is, if anything, restrained. Mr. Murray's book is so well wrought that it is likely to dominate those discussions well into the 1980s."—*Wall Street Journal*

"Murray unabashedly asserts that slashing social spending is the greatest favor the Government can bestow upon the poor. . . . Conservatives have made that argument before, but no one has documented it as thoroughly as Murray does."—*Time*

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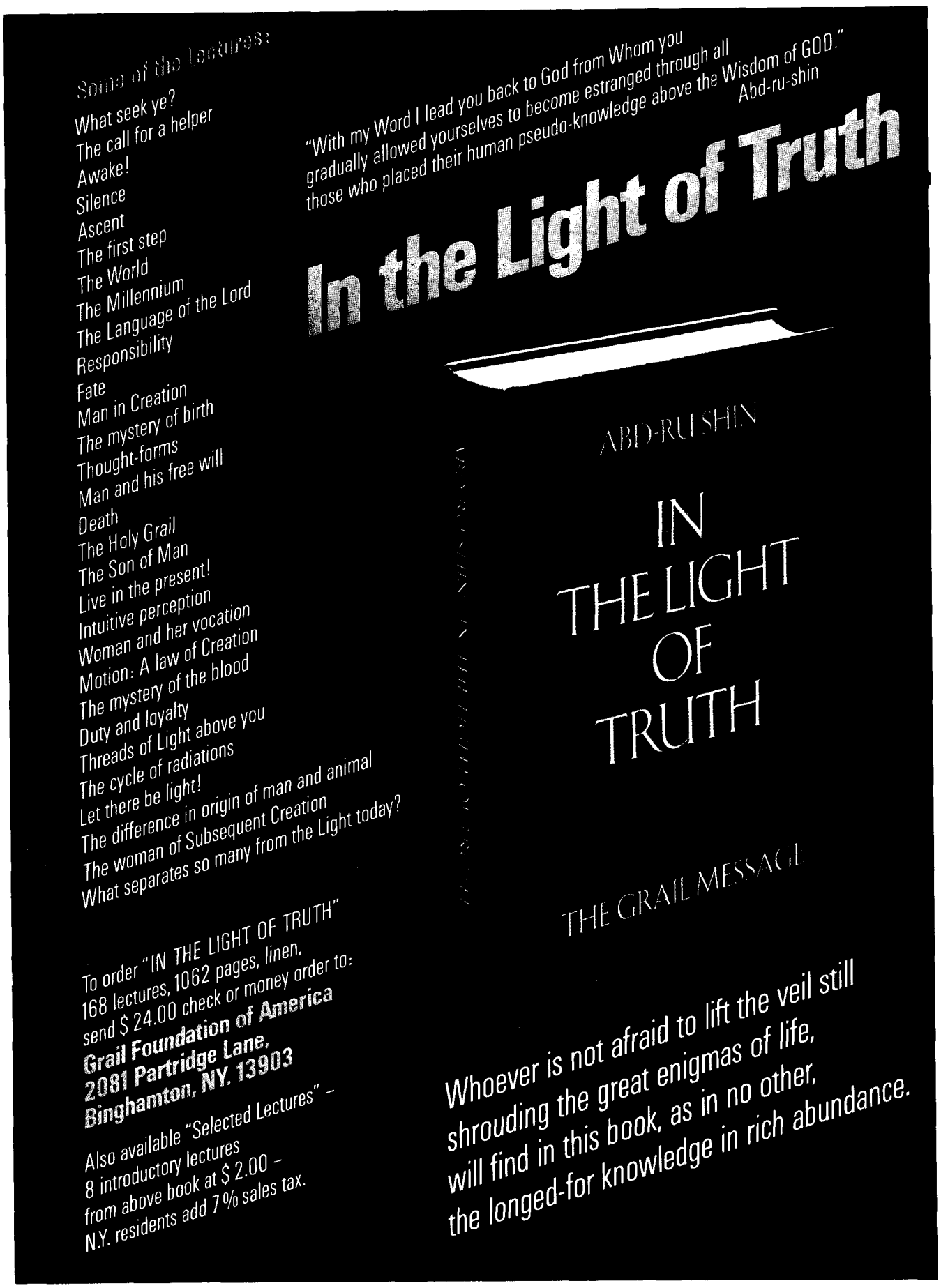
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Silence
Ascent
The first step
The World
The Millennium
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Responsibility
Fate
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Volume 19 Number 6, June 1986

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Published remarkably without regard to sex, lifestyle, race, color, creed, physical handicap, or national origin.

The American Spectator (ISSN 0148-8414) is published monthly at 1101 N. Highland Street, Arlington, Virginia 22210. Second class postage paid at Arlington, Virginia, and additional mailing offices. One-year subscription is $21. Vol. 19, No. 6. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The American Spectator, P.O. Box 10448, Arlington, Virginia 22210.

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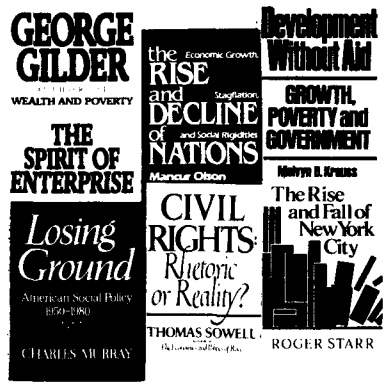

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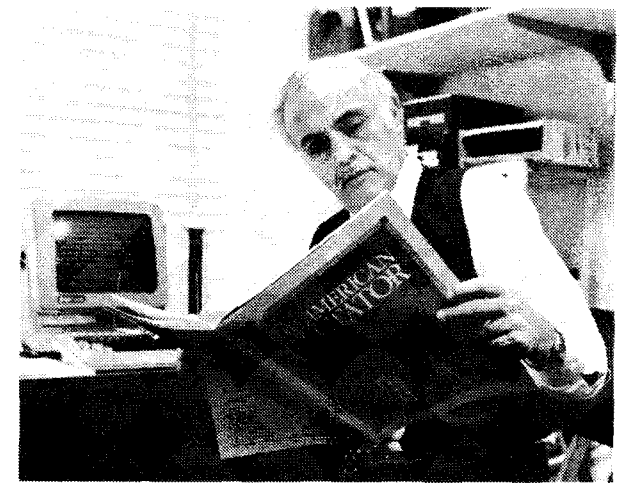

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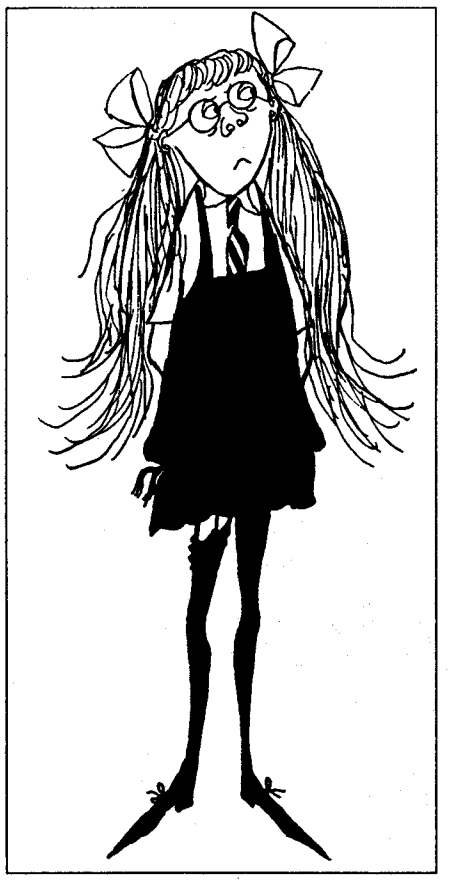
THE CONTINUING CRISIS

•April, and some of the brag and bounce was evacuated from the desert rat, Colonel M. Qaddafi. After years of provocations that no General Augusto Pinochet or President P. W. Botha would dare, that no Eastern Bloc Party panjandrum or Moscow Marxist-Leninist would attempt, the Colonel was awakened by a rain of bombs courtesy of the Pentagon. The bombing horrified many Europeans even as an assault on Mussolini would have horrified many Europeans when that strutting bully was up and about in the 1930s. The American media, after a trill of excitement, reported the bombing with woeful countenance. Yet killjoys, cisatlantic and otherwise, missed the genius of the thing, to wit: the bombers' mission began just as the evening news was getting under way and lasted a mere twelve minutes, precisely the amount of time needed to fill the networks' opening news slot before scheduled commercial breaks—what foresight. Never in world history has a military action been so prettily timed for the journalists. Mr. Michael Deaver is triumphant. The bombing of Libya even surpasses Ronald Reagan's June 1984 appearance on the windswept summits of Normandy. Hence-



forth history will conform with the dictates of media or it will be cancelled! On April 17 Mr. Jonkheer Huydecoper, Dutch Ambassador to Britain, flew to the Scilly Isles off the English coast to proclaim an end to the Netherlands' 335-year state of war with the islands.

•Reacting to reports that Colonel Qaddafi's daughter perished in the American bombing, former President Jimmy Carter broke precedent as he has so many times and pronounced that if his daughter had been killed in such a happenstance "as long as life lasted, I would seek to retaliate." And there is more: "If 17 years ago somebody had killed Amy, I would not have rested until her killer was punished." Ladies and gentlemen, the prosecution again rests; this intolerable ass never had a clue as to the duties of a President, even a retired President.

•In Providence, Rhode Island prostitution charges against two of Miss Amy Carter's fellow Brown University coeds were dropped just as charges had earlier been dropped against Miss Carter for her shameless anti-apartheid demonstrations. What judge would be foolhardy enough to cross the Mad Dog of Plains, Georgia? Members of the Soviet Peace Movement were relieved when their schoolgirl envoy, Miss Katerina Lycheza returned from the United States free of AIDS and herpes but dying for a shot of vodka or a Sterno squeeze; and *Mother Jones*, the aptly named magazine of America's infantile left, offered as a subscription premium doormats emblazoned with President Reagan's face, so "you'll never be able to wipe your feet again without chuckling." Actually, it is unlikely that the gimmick will bring any cheer whatsoever to these inveterate agelasts. What prospective *MJ* reader wipes his shoes or for that matter wears shoes? A more appropriate premium for *MJ* readers would be a pamphlet warning of the perils of hookworm and drug overdose.

•Mr. Harry Hopkins's legacy endures! In its first two votes under Gramm-Rudman's suzerainty, the Republican-controlled Senate voted compliantly to raise taxes and spending. Whether or not the Administration will be forced by law to undertake an environmental impact statement when, as the President ordered, it investigates the feasibility of developing a new mobile multiple-warhead missile remains absorbing to bird lovers and to the KGB. Mr. Otto Preminger and Mr. Harold Arlen passed on, as did Mrs. Flavia Nicholson, the bonsai expert, and Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson, the socialite divorcée who rose from selling tubular scaffolding in Baltimore, Maryland to become the Duchess of Windsor. No climber ever used her scaffolding so well. In Lake Buena Vista, Florida, concerned citizens were notified that the nation's last dusky seaside sparrow only has a year to live. Swaps was reburied on the grounds of the Kentucky Derby Museum, a chore that must have been particularly disagreeable for all involved; and after an incomparable hearing before South Bend, Indiana's Board of Public Service, police officer David Gnoth was disciplined for "gross misuse of the communication system." Cpl. Gnoth was found guilty of breaking wind on his police radio, possibly in hopes of attracting curious female police officers new to the force.

•There may be a rift developing in the Reverend Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. The Rev. is expanding his fabulous coalition to include all "the enlightened" but how are the coalition's animal liberationists taking the news that more and more progressive homosexuals are turning up in hospital with impacted gerbils in their rectums? The details of this relatively new homosexual practice will not be dwelt on in this family magazine, but suffice to say that when those who march against the use of animals in laboratories get wind of how some of the ithyphallic brethren are using unconsenting gerbils the Moral Majority will surely have reenforcements. Miss Jane Fonda and her husband, California Assemblyman Tom Hayden, were sued by a former employee for allegedly violating the federal Racketeer Influence and Corruption Organizations Act. Worse still, Mr. Jan Stuart, the cosmetics wizard, has averred that Mr. Hayden has the worst complexion of any pol in America, suggesting snidely that wife Jane "develop a workout for his unfortunate complexion." Miss Judith Richardson Haimes, the esteemed psychic from Clearwater, Florida, was awarded more than $1 million in damages after contending that a CAT scan had destroyed her miraculous powers, and Mr. Walter Mondale laid his 1984 defeat to the Rev. Jackson.

•On April 26 Miss Maria Shriver, a member of America's first family of fantasy, married Mr. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the physical culturist, and a huge crowd turned up in Hyannis Port. But then large crowds have turned up at Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum too, and Madame Tussaud's celebrated figures are considerably wittier and more life-like. Retail prices fell at an average rate of 1.9 percent during the first three months of 1986. Mr. Clint Eastwood, a movie star, was elected mayor of Carmel, California, and despite the rumored spread of prudery among homosexuals the incidence of AIDS among them grew at a surprising rate in recent months, according to medical authorities in New York City and Chicago. Finally, world chicken- and snail-eating speed records were set on April 27 in Kortezubi, Spain, where Sr. Valentine Florintino inhaled 4 pounds, 10 ounces of chicken in 10 minutes and 37 seconds and Sr. Josu Basterretxea finished off 87 snails weighing 2 pounds and 6.8 ounces in one minute and five seconds.

•The U.S. House of Representatives eased restrictions on handgun transportation. In Peking, China, police arrested a 42-year-old Peking man on charges of cannibalism, and passing off teenagers as pork. Senator Edward M. Kennedy was fined $75 for speeding and not carrying his driver's license. Swine researchers as prominent as Miss Nelda Palmer converged on Mr. Doug Johnson's pig farm in Fairfield, Iowa, listened to the love songs that Mr. Johnson plays for his pigs, and went away convinced of his thesis and perhaps just a little bit in love. Mr. Johnson holds that his pigs fatten faster while listening to tapes of such amorous lyrics as "My dearest red hot mama, you are so provocative in your black silk bikini underwear. You're the only one who really understands me. If only you'd do the dishes, I'd treasure you day and night and a few afternoons." Mr. Johnson is an admirer of the late Mr. D. H. Lawrence.

•Evidence mounts that the United Nations may actually be a Nazi front

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organization. Throughout the month increasingly convincing reports linked former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, now a candidate for Austria's presidency, with Nazi war crimes. All charges were denied by Mr. Waldheim, though he did drop his campaign slogan, "The Man the World Trusted." At the end of the month the Simon Wiesenthal Center revealed that Mr. Herman Klenner, an East German professor who in February became vice chairman of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, is a former card-carrying member of the Nazi party. In Dallas, Texas Mr. Mark Thatcher, son of the British Prime Minister, was asked to vacate his apartment for fear that his mother's recent rash actions might have terrorist repercussions for Mr. Thatcher's neighbors. Mrs. Thatcher was the only European leader to support the American bombing of Libya. Mr. John Zaccaro Jr., son of the forever-wronged Geraldine Ferraro, pleaded not guilty to yet another cocaine charge; and the anti-nuclear movement in the USSR received another boost on April 28 when calamity struck a nuclear power plant near historic Kiev. If only Dr. Helen Caldicott had been in Chernobyl at the time! *—RET*

CORRESPONDENCE

Making Way for Aquino

In the April issue of *TAS*, Tom Bethell footnotes he was told of CIA involvement in anti-Marcos activity in the Philippines. He relates this alleged activity involved both the citizen watchdog group that monitors elections (NAMFREL) and the military reform movement.

As for NAMFREL, I am unfamiliar with any involvement the CIA may have had. However, both the National Endowment for Democracy and the Asia Foundation were influential in that organization. When the NED was reported to have funneled $130,000 via a U.S. trade union to the Philippine trade union congress, this action reminded some observers of CIA activity with the earlier NAMFREL of the 1950s.

As for the military reform movement, I can say with positive assurance not only CIA but DoD and State have long been aware of the role the reform officers could play to facilitate a succession of power in the Philippines.

Last summer the notion was hot. The National Defense University held a conference on the military reform movement. However, proceedings and papers were classified secret with a prohibition on release for 15 years.

Essentially, the policy quietly aimed to foster the reformers through backchannels. Over the years the Pentagon knew many of the 1,500 or so reform officers as a byproduct of official contact: through JUSMAG for example, the U.S. military advisory group provided under mutual security agreements. More significant, but less public, was the liaison through IMED, the International Military Exchange program. Some 325 junior and mid-level officers in the Armed Forces of the Philippines have come to the U.S. each year. In addition to improving the AFP's fighting capability, IMET served to forge what Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense James Kelly calls a "special friendship."

By last spring both interagency optimists and pessimists agreed this "friendship" could be directly applied in two ways toward the U.S. policy objective—"the revitalization of Philippine [democratic] institutions." The optimists held it could provide further leverage on Marcos to clean up his act. The pessimists saw that, in the event of collapse, it could enable the reformers to act as honest brokers during the transition of power—encouraged, to be sure, by an unseen American hand. On the day, it was this latter role that made international heroes of Defense Minister Enrile and Lt. General Ramos.

Late in the campaign a reform officer was quoted in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*: "If there are reliable reports of massive fraud in the election 'then we would have to act.' " In a statement issued after the election, the military reform movement claimed fraud and said its members would "refuse to use force and violence on innocent and freedom-loving Filipinos." The magazine further reported that U.S. officials had assured the reformers that the U.S. Embassy asked Marcos not to "move against" the movement.

Citing reformist sources, *Business Day* in Manila revealed on February 28 that the movement originally planned to liberate the Cagayan region as a first move against Marcos. Further, they had informed our military attachés of their plan a good week before the rebellion.

Shortly thereafter the amphibious assault ship *Iwo Jima*, with a Marine battalion landing team of 4,000 men, arrived at Subic Bay. When, after the rebellion, the de facto Philippine base commander at Clark, Brig. General Eduardo Ermita, defected, rebel aircraft were permitted to land—secure from forces still loyal to Marcos and Ver. U.S. warnings to Marcos together with rebel airpower nullified the threat to Enrile, Ramos, and people power. The unseen American hand was sending a signal. Fortunately, the message was received and understood.

The military reformers were the honest brokers. The U.S. must encourage them to continue the job should the squabbling factions that comprise people power cancel each other, to the advantage of the somewhat dormant Communist insurgents. The movement pledged full support to Mrs. Aquino. For Philippine democracy to revitalize as we all wish, the U.S. must see to it that this marriage is appreciated as one not of convenience, but necessity.

—John F. Morton
Annapolis, Maryland

One Fine Lady

Vic Gold's "Images of Bush" (*TAS*, April 1986) is very good, as is his assessment of the powerful supermedia big-feet-tub-thumpers whose ruthlessness can sometimes be very costly to honest politicians when it serves their purpose.

Why should George Bush need an "image" when he has already won his spurs in the political arena, and done so without besmirching either his personal life or his political integrity? His credentials are authentic, and not the least of his assets is his loyal, faithful wife who is one fine lady.

—Irene Prater Dell
Carl Junction, Missouri

Hamby's Wallop

Alonzo Hamby's reflections on our foreign policy establishment's celebration of forty years' containment ("Containment's Comeback," *TAS*, March 1986) inadvertently illustrates the point I made at that gathering: that the establishment is too smug to realize what is happening in the world. Mr. Hamby basked in the aurora of the establishment's icon, the man he called his "lion," George Kennan, and then called me a "yelping cub" because I do not think much of that "lion." Obviously having failed to understand a word of what I said, he passed his misunderstanding on to his readers.

I fully meant to discomfit the overstuffed egos sitting with Hamby's "lion." I chose to do it with the voice of Boris Ponomarev, until this year and for nearly half a century the guiding light of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee's International Department. This literary technique, familiar to readers of C. S. Lewis and Montesquieu, was obviously lost on Hamby, who also called Ponomarev, a man with the power of a Paul Volcker and the longevity of a J. Edgar Hoover, a "minor Soviet functionary."

I thought it would be bracing for an intellectually and socially inbred audience to hear how they must look to the other side. The Soviets really do have a view of what has happened since 1917, different from that of Hamby's "NATO intellectuals"—a view that accounts for the fact that now the sun literally never sets on Soviet troops, while the West has not ceased to retreat. Hamby treats this fact, as did the NATO intellectuals, like the proverbial skunk at the garden party, whose presence can be conceded only theoretically, lest the gathering be spoiled.

Here then is the essence of my remarks, which so upset the "NATO intellectuals": "Containment" is a method of mostly warless struggle which the Soviet Union practiced earlier and better than the U.S. foreign policy establishment. The Soviet term for it since Lenin's time has been "peaceful coexistence." Believing that in the long run this planet is not big enough for any way of life contradictory to theirs, the Soviet leaders have always looked at the frontiers separating the "Socialist commonwealth" from the rest of the world as depending purely on the "correlation of forces" between the two camps at any given moment.

Thus when the Soviet Union was very weak, its leaders preached and practiced "Socialism in one country" and were willing to give up literally anything to safeguard that. The Soviets' forays abroad in those years, including the great venture in Spain between 1936 and 1938, may be likened to a well-disciplined army's elastic defense. Even after World War II and almost until his death, Stalin was convinced that the correlation of forces would favor Western "intervention." But this did not mean that Soviet leaders accepted this unfavorable correlation of forces for the long run.

In fact, the events between 1948 and 1955—events which the NATO intellectuals regard as unalloyed triumphs—convinced the Soviets that Western leaders did not have it in them to make use of a correlation of forces favorable to them, and that they might put up

(continued on page 51)

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EDITORIALS

THE FRENCH FORGET

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

In the end political resolve comes down to a question of character. When the leaders of the French government flinched from allowing American warplanes to fly over French territory en route to Qaddafi's Libya, thus condemning American airmen to all the dangers attendant with a military mission now made 2400 miles more arduous, they showed their smallness. In the pinch Prime Minister Thatcher displayed nobility; these Frenchmen revealed flawed character.

I wonder if they would have allowed our planes to fly over a more precisely designated route, leapfrogging such places as Ardennes, Suresnes, Rhone, the Lorraine Valley, St. James, St. Laurent, and Epinal. All contain military cemeteries where American men lie face up, forever gazing into the skies of France. Surely these men would not object if they were to see once more the underbelly of an American bomber flying far from home to defend the values of the West. These values will always offend dictators whether they are the authors of *Mein Kampf*, the *Green Book*, or whatever other collection of claptrap esotery they compose to warrant their lusts. Against savagery civilization will always need leaders who stand ready.

There have been times when French leaders have shown the requisite readiness. In October 1962, when the United States squared off against the Soviet Union and risked nuclear war over Soviet missiles in Cuba, Britain's Prime Minister Harold Macmillan wavered upon receiving President Kennedy's call. President Charles de Gaulle did not. When Kennedy's emissary, Dean Acheson, sought his cooperation the Frenchman replied, "If there is a war, France will be with you"; and when Soviet Ambassador Serge Vinogradov belabored him with warnings that he risked the nuclear destruction of France, de Gaulle broke a stony silence, rose from behind his desk in the Elysée Palace, extended a hand in farewell, and said "*Hélas, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, nous mourirons ensemble! Au revoir, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur.*" ("Alas, Mr. Ambassador, we'll die together! Goodbye, Mr. Ambassador.")

The regime of Colonel Qaddafi has been a criminal regime. It might have carried on commerce with Western Europe and other civilized countries, but in the more important province of moral values it has been hostile to all that they stand for and have stood for during the better part of modern times. Qaddafi's kind of far-flung violence is a threat to the moral order established by the West over decades. Qaddafi and like-minded Middle Eastern dictators have made it a matter of policy to murder innocents, even those who have had nothing whatsoever to do with government or politics. Not even Mussolini showed such savagery. Did Hitler or Stalin in times of ostensible peace as readily resort to the random murder of innocents as do the Middle East's enemies of Western democracy? I doubt it. This species of terrorism is a new abomination in the annals of war.

All the arguments for avoiding our military action against Qaddafi have been heard before. We recognize that some Europeans have profited in commerce with him. It is apparent that some were more exposed to his cowardly terrorists than were most Americans. But the fact remains that he has been a firebrand whose record is one of ever-growing belligerency, violence, and cruelty. As Westerners grew more "reasonable" Qaddafi grew more horrible. The Europeans who expressed disapproval of Washington's strike against Qaddafi must face the grisly fact that as they prospered in commerce with this brute they contributed to the destruction of the humane values of their civilization. If they are indeed more exposed to terrorists today, experience shows that they will be still more exposed tomorrow. Reason conduces to the conclusion that it is both moral and prudent to do today what will with greater difficulty have to be done tomorrow.

Our attack on Libya was but another chapter in the defense of our civilization. It will not be the last. It should have been made by an international force composed of the major victims of Middle Eastern terror. In French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac's remarks after the attack there was just a hint that he recognized this. That would be a good omen. In this country those of us who defend NATO are sorely pressed by others. They cite frequent European abandonment of us when we needed them and call for an end to our participation in NATO. Then we shall simply bury our dead under American skies. □

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post *column syndicated by King Features.*

IF YOU CAN READ THIS . . .

Oh happy few! According to a recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau, fully 14 percent of the adults living within our borders are illiterate, at least in English. Thus, they are the fortunate possessors of an absolutely impregnable excuse for never reading the *New York Review of Books*. Better than that, they are not obliged to suffer through *any* of the incondite stuff published in this great Republic, not the unreadable poetry, the tedious novels, the journalism, the advertisements, the public relations drivel. Fortune has kissed these unlettered Yanks on both cheeks.

Of course, the spokesman who broke the news for the Census Bureau was nearly disconsolate. The Bureau's literacy test was of the multiple-choice variety, and to miss the correct answers one had to be as ignorant of the English language as Colonel Qaddafi is of the finger bowl. Yet, quite possibly the gloom of the Census Bureau spokesman is unwarranted. Ask yourself: why lament that 14 percent of our fellow Americans cannot possibly read the journalists' reports of calamities, impending calamities, or calamities narrowly missed? By being denied the printed word this blessed 14 percent might be one of the few groups in America that sees the world as it is, and with a greater appreciation of culture. True, an illiterate cannot avoid modern architecture or modern art in public places; but, remote from the modern novel, he need never learn to hate literature.

Those social scientists who conducted the Census Bureau's literacy test might, upon further research, find that these illiterates lead satisfied lives. We know that 42 percent earned practically nothing the year before they were tested. But that is hardly a cause for alarm. Many rich heirs and heiresses are unemployed and earn nothing. Nonetheless, they live contentedly, sustained by trust funds and by papa. Perhaps our illiterates are not as well endowed, but they have access to all the state's charitable programs. And, in-

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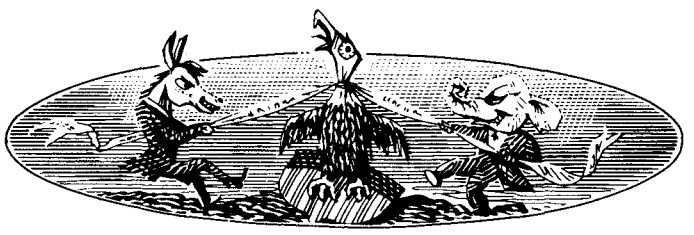
cidentally, considering the literacy of those rich heirs whom I know, the Census Bureau's 14 percent must include plenty of gilded idlers.

My guess is that in terms of longevity, comparative health, marital condition, criminal records, and all the other indices of well-being our illiterate 14 percent are doing quite well, freed as they are from the terrors of modern American sophistication. Further research will doubtless show that these illiterates live longer, have better digestion, and see shrinks less frequently than many other reputedly better-educated groups in our society. Which is not to assume that the Census Bureau's 14 percent did not include a few *soi disant* sophisticates.

The study reveals that of the native English-speakers 70 percent did not finish high school. What of the remaining 30 percent? Many undoubtedly are college graduates. It would be helpful to know how many of them graduated with honors or went on to pursue advanced degrees. In the course of my literary duties I must read many new books, and I can testify that many of the Republic's illiterates are proof-readers and more are authors. I have the gravest doubts that novelists such as John Irving and Robert Coover would pass the Census Bureau's test. Raymond Carver, Ann Beattie, and the rest of the vacuous Minimalists would probably score about as well as Prince, which brings to mind the herds of morons who inhabit the world of celebrity and pop entertainment. Anyone who watches the television talk shows realizes that most of these patheticos are subverbal and, what is more, incapable of tasteful dress. But I wander.

The fact is that no one should be surprised by the high rate of illiteracy in the Republic. Neither the written word nor the printed word is accorded much admiration here nowadays. Graceful expression is infrequent in our public forums, and when it does appear it is often scorned as pretentious or insufficiently democratic. Carelessness and vulgarity characterize most American writing whether it be journalism or fiction. Even university professors often speak in the argot of the slob. It is a lovely irony that as higher education spreads so does disdain for the educated mind. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



DAS KAPITAL IDEAS

by Tom Bethell

There were twenty of us in the Finnair lounge (JFK), beginning our ten-day, three-city tour of the Soviet Union: Leningrad, Tbilisi (Georgia), and Moscow, in that order. Ernie Lefever of the Ethics and Public Policy Center asked me if it was my first trip. I said yes and asked the same question of Douglas MacArthur, former U.S. Ambassador to Iran and Japan, now retired from the foreign service.

"No," he said, "I went to Moscow in August, 1939, with a letter from Roosevelt to Stalin. We had heard that the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was about to be signed. Roosevelt wanted to dissuade Stalin because he knew it meant war. But we were too late. When I arrived the pact had just been signed."

I thought this rather a good answer to a getting-to-know-you question. At first I thought it might be a put-on, but he was quite serious. MacArthur had the doleful eyes of a basset hound and the high balding dome of his famous uncle.

"Did you meet Stalin?"

"Not on that occasion."

Doug, as we took to calling him, acted as our unofficial chief of protocol, toastmaster, and speechmaker. The leader of the group was Larry Moffitt, a 36-year-old Texan with a ready repertoire of laconic phrases. A member of Rev. Sun Yung Moon's Unification Church, he was a veteran of two earlier Soviet tours. Among those also making the trip with us were: Martin Nolan, the editorial page editor of the *Boston Globe*; Richard and Cynthia Grenier; Arnold Beichman, former newspaperman and professor, now a columnist affiliated with the Hoover Institution; Richard Brookhiser of *National Review*; *Washington Times* foreign editor Holger Jensen; journalist emeritus Clark Mollenhoff; Dixy Lee Ray, former governor of Washington State and chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission; and your managing editor Wladyslaw Pleszczynski (see p. 56).

The tour was arranged and paid for by News World Communications, the organization that founded the *Washington Times* and the *New York Tribune*. (The *Boston Globe* paid for Marty Nolan.)

A few of us had already been to the Soviet Union. Jensen, our Camel-smoking Marlboro Man, had been the Associated Press's correspondent in 1969 but was thrown out for "activities hostile to socialist construction." (For one he published an interview with Vladimir Bukovsky.) Both Richard Grenier and Ernie Lefever had been in Moscow at the time of the Khrushchev thaw.

As we circled above Leningrad I looked below for signs of life but could see little more than a desolate terrain; a lonely road with a lonely truck; a winding river. No suburban development as we understand that phrase. Leningrad Airport's cracked and rutted runway would scarcely have passed FAA inspection. The air quality (aviation fumes, grit, and smoke) in the depressing gray terminal building would not have satisfied EPA. Customs was an ordeal. Officials made off with Nolan's copy of David Shipler's innocuous book *Russia: Broken Idols, Solemn Dreams* and promised to return it in Moscow (but did not). They also took from my briefcase a Mid-Atlantic Research Associates report on Yurchenko (the re-defector), but let through (with a second glance) a book of homilies by Msgr. Josemaria Escriva.

The customs inspection of our group was wholly ideological. They took no interest at all in our material possessions, a lot of interest in the printed matter we brought with us. Uniformed guards leafed slowly through two newsmagazines I had brought along, pausing to scrutinize photos of the *USS Saratoga* in the Gulf of Sidra. An interview with Jeane Kirkpatrick, reproduced from *Encounter*, was solemnly transported away to some higher authority, along with my passport, and returned half an hour later with grudging approval.

Olga, our Intourist guide, a member of the Communist party, watched non-committally. Larry Moffitt said he had never seen an Intourist guide hassle an immigration official. (Establishing the hierarchies of command, the recognition of who is subordinate to whom, must be one of the most difficult tasks in establishing a Communist state.) Olga seemed to belong in a spy movie. She wore a maroon pork pie hat, high boots to match, and belted raincoat with collar turned up. She spoke good English and kept a comradely eye on us throughout our tour. Poor Olga was forever filling out duplicate forms with little bits of carbon paper, and I believe at night she filled out more that we never saw—about us. (This from Intourist guides who have defected.) We were free at any time to leave the tour, and many of us did so. →

Tom Bethell is The American Spectator*'s Washington correspondent.*

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On the way to our hotel we caught our first glimpse of socialist construction: not so much empty lots ("lots" implies property) as muddy wasteland beside the lightly traveled road. Haphazard mounds of earth dotted the roadside, along with splintered timbers, rusted pipe, and occasional evidence of half-hearted spadework, long since abandoned. ("The state protects socialist property and provides conditions for its growth," says Article 10 of the Soviet Constitution. "No one has the right to use socialist property for personal gain or other selfish ends.")

Our hotel, Swedish-built for the 1980 Olympics, was on the outskirts of Leningrad. In the normal course of events Soviet citizens were not allowed inside. The authorities labor under a great and permanent dread that Russians will meet foreigners and thereby (presumably) learn forbidden things. This in itself is an amazing thing since all Soviet science and technology, architecture and (especially) ideas seem to have been imported, and for centuries this has been true. Sometimes in the course of our tour it seemed that the Russian language and the Russian Orthodox Church alone were indigenous.

In the background was the unwelcome sound of a fast-paced beat—Leningrad rock, as I came to think of it, and it was hard to avoid. Later, in Moscow, we told Olga that U.S. tourists would swoon over Tolstoyan peasants strumming balalaikas (a Moscow version of New Orleans's Preservation Hall). Olga may have wondered whether this was meant as a compliment to Russia or an insult to the "floor show" we had watched. I think we had just wearied of imitation.

Our hotel rooms were okay, but Larry had warned us not to drink the water in Leningrad. Bottled mineral water was safe, he said, but its drawback was that "it tastes as though it has been run through a carp." That turned out to be true and one was reduced to Pepski.

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Six of us stood outside the hotel in the long twilight. Opposite was a memorial to the Great Patriotic War; across the way blocks of scruffy-looking flats disappearing into the distance. Arnold Beichman, a short, stout man with a white thatch of hair, was talking about one of his favorite subjects, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, whose icon was everywhere. (I hardly recall seeing one picture of Gorbachev.) Beichman was saying that Lenin was the only "historical figure" in the Soviet Union. The rest were just shadows. "Where are the collected works of Brezhnev today?" he asked. "There are historians here who devote their time to studying a week in the life of Lenin."

Beichman said he had never before been allowed into the Soviet Union, although he must have spent half his life reading, thinking, and arguing about it. His father had emigrated to the U.S. from the Ukraine, he told me. Arnold grew up in an orthodox Jewish household in New York City. He was supposed to become a rabbi but somewhere along the way he read H. L. Mencken and today he says he is an agnostic.

He mentioned Lenin's 1902 pamphlet, "What Is To Be Done?" which he seemed to regard as a kind of "underground" blueprint of the twentieth century. Here Lenin said that the proletariat would never bring about a revolution because they could be bought off with crumbs from the capitalist table. They would need help from the true revolutionaries—intellectuals of the propertied class.

We decided on the spur of the moment to go to the center of Leningrad on the Metro (opened in 1955). I was not prepared for the dense crowds of people swarming on the sidewalks. The subway was deep and the riders coming up the escalator looked curiously across at us. Foreigners! Wlady said how much dirtier the subway looked

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than when he lived in Leningrad for a few months in 1977.

"I just realized," Beichman said on the train, "all these people are Communists!" We looked about us with renewed curiosity. "I've spent all this time criticizing the Soviet Union, and now I'm beginning to worry that nothing iniquitous is happening," he added. The people were law-abiding; no guns to their heads; going home to wives and children. No muggings underway either. Beichman added that this of course explained the reaction of so many travelers to the Soviet Union: the human continuity disguises the political discontinuity. They're just like us! (So why can't we live together in peace?)

Still, it did make an impression to see the Russians who daily had no choice but to submit to the Communist system of command from above. "I think Gorbachev knew what he was doing when he let us in," Beichman said. I knew what he meant.

Nevsky Prospekt was packed with people trudging along in the dim twilight. Not much streetlighting. Not many cars. Not much in the shops, if you could even call them that. Everything looked run down and dilapidated. Nothing had been swept or painted in years. Occasionally a young man would dart up to us and offer to exchange roubles for dollars at an exchange rate closer to the illegal market rate.[1] Wlady said that in his 1977 stay in the Soviet Union he was never so approached. Perhaps there is change here, perhaps a growing fearlessness on the part of the young, who seemed on the surface to be more "capitalistic" and more independent-minded than their elders. On the other hand it is quite possible that this trend has been observable for decades and has always led nowhere.

A youth did a double take as we breezed along Yankee Doodle-style and I saw him out of the corner of my eye break away from his companions: another hopeful money changer. (We refused all such offers because of course they are illegal and could have landed us all in trouble.) The young man spoke good English. He walked along with us for a few blocks. He was openly scornful of Communism and implied that none of his friends believed a word of it. He had read Hedrick Smith's book *The Russians* and thought it accurate, but he found it hard to lay his hands on books in English, other than innocuous Eng. lit. works. Afghanistan? He was worried about that because he knew he would be drafted and quite likely sent there: recruits from regions bordering Afghanistan (whom he referred to as "Arabs," meaning Muslims) couldn't be relied on, he said.

Beichman asked the young man if he was worried about being followed. No, the authorities would only be keeping an eye on us if we were White House big shots or, let's say, notorious anti-Communists, he said. I didn't have the heart to tell him that Beichman was one of the most notorious in the United States. Someone slipped him a few dollars and he was gone in a second.

The Winter Palace loomed up in front of us. All was quiet within, the large square in front of it deserted.

"Kerensky, that jerk," Beichman

(*continued on page 53*)

[1]The official exchange rate is 7.2 roubles for $10. Freelance money changers regularly offer 3 roubles per dollar, and one heard that the real "market" rate is about 5 roubles per dollar. Thus Soviet officialdom intercepts perhaps 85 percent of all U.S. dollars spent in the Soviet Union. Different sources give different figures, but perhaps 60,000 U.S. tourists visited the Soviet Union in 1985. (The Helsinki Commission thinks this figure is too high, claiming that only 35,000 Americans visited the USSR in 1984.) If we assume that these tourists spend on average $1,000 per head, U.S. tourism yielded the Soviet government approximately $50 million in clear "profit" last year. This is a small fraction of hard currency that the Soviets now stand to lose as a result of the oil price drop.

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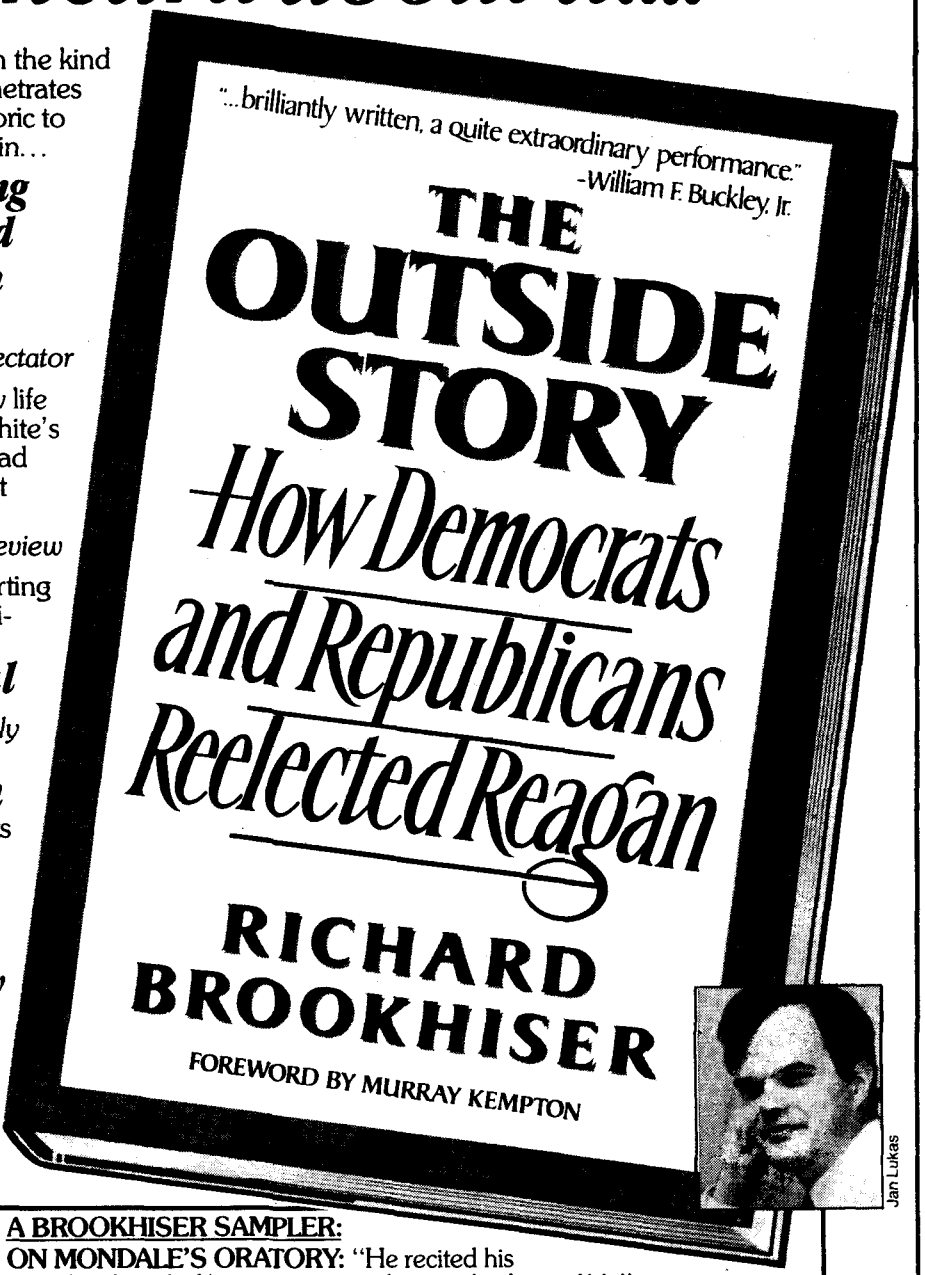

A BROOKHISER SAMPLER:
ON MONDALE'S ORATORY: "He recited his speech solemnly, like someone explaining the facts of life."
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Carnes Lord

THE MBFR MYSTERY

If the Soviets accept NATO's latest offer, we're in big trouble.

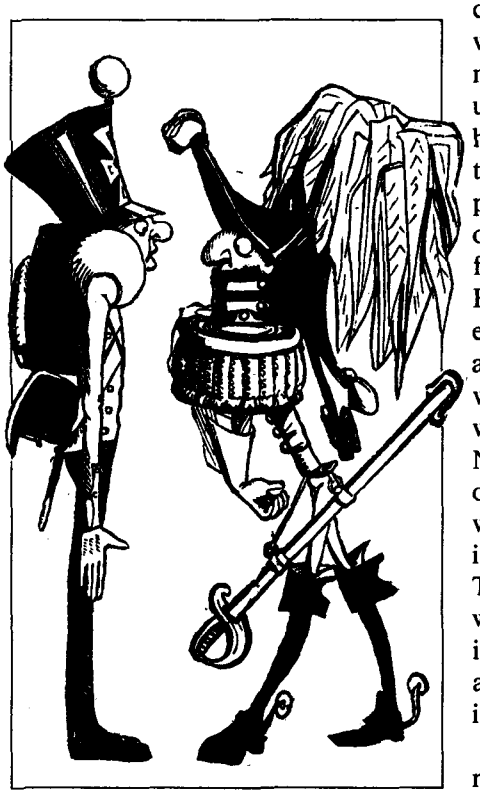
The talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions in Europe (MBFR), which have been conducted in Vienna for the last twelve years by representatives of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, have achieved notoriety chiefly as the longest-running arms control negotiations in world history. Now, with the recent introduction by NATO of a new proposal, they are vying for the distinction of producing the first major arms control agreement of the post-détente era. There is a great and unplumbed mystery in all this. In the Sherlock Holmes tale, it was, of course, a dog's failure to bark which supplied the key to understanding a murder. In the case of MBFR, the mystery is rather why no one noticed when a corpse that had been securely pronounced dead suddenly arose and started to dance.

The MBFR talks began in 1973, at the height of U.S.-Soviet good feeling following the successful conclusion of the original strategic arms agreements in the spring of 1972. But the Western impetus behind MBFR came not so much from the enthusiasts of arms control and détente as from a coalition of defense-minded Americans and Europeans concerned over the threat of unilateral reductions of U.S. troops in Europe, which were strongly pushed at the time by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. It was agreed that the focus of the talks would be the territory of the two Germanys, the Benelux countries, Poland and Czechoslovakia, and the ground and air forces stationed in them. The negotiations included the NATO allies of the United States (except France) and the Warsaw Pact allies of the Soviet Union either as direct participants or as observers. From the beginning, the Soviets saw the talks as a useful tool for sowing political trouble in the Western alliance as well as for acquiring what the Europeans like to call a *droit de regard* over NATO force levels. A particular Soviet aim was to constrain the size and capabilities of the West German Bundeswehr.

MBFR succeeded admirably in its original purpose of holding off American troop withdrawals. At the same time, with the talks rapidly reaching a stalemate over issues that were relatively uncontroversial within NATO, the political damage deriving from MBFR proved minimal—indeed, in certain respects the talks were actively helpful to the U.S. as a forum for intra-alliance dialogue and the formation of consensus on European security issues. Yet all of this is to say little more than that the bad is the enemy of the worst. The problem with MBFR was always that any mutual withdrawal of U.S. and Soviet forces from Europe would have grossly asymmetrical consequences. Any U.S. units removed from central Europe would have to be withdrawn thousands of miles across the Atlantic to the United States, while Soviet troops withdrawn to their homeland could remain less than 500 miles from the inner-German border. This asymmetry has grown increasingly severe during the lifetime of MBFR, as steady improvements in the quality and quantity of Soviet forces in Europe have increased Soviet chances of a quick victory and made more problematic the resupply and reinforcement of NATO's central front by the United States.

The Soviets and their allies originally sought equal reductions on each side, while the Western position called for reductions to an equal ceiling. Both sides have now accepted the principle of a common ceiling of 700,000 ground and 900,000 combined air and ground personnel on each side. This would require the withdrawal of some 90,000 NATO and 290,000 Warsaw Pact personnel. (As just indicated, it is far from clear that even this numerical disparity in NATO's favor would not result in a net benefit for the Soviet Union.) The problem is that the Soviets have never been prepared to admit that the Warsaw Pact has some 200,000 more troops deployed in the reductions area than does NATO. They maintain that the two sides have been and remain essentially at parity, and that the West has used fallacious assumptions in calculating numbers of combatants on each side. Dispute over the "data issue" has been the principal stumbling block in the way of an MBFR agreement. The other area in which NATO and the Warsaw Pact have been sharply at odds is verification: the Western side insists that any agreement be accompanied by "associated measures" that include arrangements for on-site inspection of Pact territory.

In December 1985, NATO put forth a new proposal in Vienna. In this offer, the West took a major step in the direction of yielding to long-standing Eastern demands. It accepted the framework of the previous Warsaw Pact proposal of February 1985, which called for a first phase agreement involving token U.S. and Soviet ground force reductions and a commitment by all participants not to increase forces in central Europe. What is more, the West dropped its demand that the data issue be resolved before reductions take place. According to the current proposal, reductions would be carried out over a period of a year, at the end of which there would be an exchange of data on NATO and Pact forces. A three-year period in which neither side could increase forces would follow. Other provisions include a non-circumvention clause that would permit each side to take appropriate steps should the other party engage in threatening military activities (such as mobilization outside the zone of reductions).



The Soviets have yet to respond affirmatively to the proposal, but if they do, what is the likely effect? To begin with, in the absence of any data agreement and with most verification measures not yet in place, it is not evident how NATO will be able to determine that reductions have actually taken place, or that reductions have not been offset through the reintroduction of forces. It should be recalled that Leonid Brezhnev announced in 1979 a unilateral withdrawal of 20,000 Soviet troops and 1,000 tanks from East Germany; what was actually involved, however, was a reorganization of Soviet forces. No reduction in overall troop levels ever occurred, although some units were withdrawn with great fanfare. But the issue of the reduction itself is trivial. The truly significant question is to what extent an MBFR agreement will impose new political constraints on alliance policy and on alliance action in an East-West crisis.

NATO has always resisted any agreement that would impose a specific ceil-

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ing on national forces. While the Soviets continue to press for such ceilings, it is not clear that a concession in this area would cost them much. Even if the Bundeswehr is not legally restricted by MBFR, any attempt to increase its size in compensation for the withdrawal of American forces is likely to encounter severe political resistance within West Germany on the grounds that such an increase would undermine prospects for further progress in MBFR. Generally speaking, an agreement is likely to generate new political pressures against conventional force improvements of any kind in every NATO country in the reductions zone.

This is serious enough; but the political constraints such an agreement would place on NATO in a crisis are potentially fatal. The commitment not to increase forces in the zone will make it much more difficult for NATO to reach a decision to mobilize in an acute crisis, particularly if Soviet actions are ambiguous (for example, if mobilization occurs in the western military districts of the Soviet Union under the guise of an exercise). In particular, it will no doubt be politically out of the question to introduce additional American forces into West Germany unless large Soviet units actually begin to cross into Poland, regardless of the existence of an explicit non-circumvention clause.

There are large ironies here. The Western proposal of December 1985 reportedly represents a joint British-West German initiative. These same West Germans have recently been voicing reservations about the apparent progress the U.S. and the Soviets are making toward an agreement on intermediate-range nuclear forces, arguing that the elimination of NATO's newly-deployed Pershing II's and ground-launched cruise missiles will be destabilizing unless the conventional balance improves in NATO's favor. It would be one thing if NATO had achieved its long-sought goal of major reductions in Soviet forces stationed in East Germany (even though questions might remain about the ability of the Soviets rapidly to reinforce any standing-start offensive). But the reductions being proposed are a nullity in military terms. All NATO is buying itself are Soviet promises for the future and an arms control regime that will create new and unwelcome political realities in the present. In the bargain, the U.S. and its allies have thrown away a principle—prior agreement on data relevant to compliance with arms control treaties—which is essential for effective verification of any agreement with the Soviets, and which the Soviets had accepted as essential in the SALT II treaty and elsewhere. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to believe that the Soviets can long resist taking NATO's yes for an answer, though it can be anticipated that they will extract a last pound of flesh in the form of further Western concessions on verification.

What is going on? MBFR was once a conservative cause, but at a time when conservatives were fighting a desperate holding action against the tides of American confusion and retreat. The current MBFR initiative comes with the label Thatcher, Kohl, and Reagan. But it is a measure of the continuing disarray of Western security policy that this initiative not only serves no discernible conservative purpose, but makes little sense as arms control. Perhaps the problem with conservatives is that they don't take arms control seriously enough. After all, let us not forget (to cite the most arresting example) that it was Jimmy Carter who let the Soviets know that any violation of any provision of the SALT II treaty would bring on nuclear war, while Thatcher, Kohl, and Reagan have done precisely nothing to remedy demonstrable Soviet violations of a variety of arms control agreements. Or perhaps the lesson is simply that arms control talks acquire an institutional momentum that is difficult to reverse without paying a political price, and that conservatives are unwilling to pay the premium political price they know will be exacted from them by the current arbiters of Western political culture. That these arbiters have in the present instance failed to bark is perhaps the key to the mystery. □

Owen Harries

ASEAN NIGHTS

There are limits to the Reagan Doctrine.

Paul Wolfowitz, until recently the State Department's assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, played a key role in making and implementing U.S. policy toward the Philippines during the recent crisis. Now he is off to be America's ambassador to Indonesia, the Philippines' nearest neighbor. It should be an interesting experience.

In his new job, Ambassador Wolfowitz will have cause to consider very carefully the interaction of two facts. First, recent events in Manila (and to a lesser extent Haiti) have aroused considerable enthusiasm in America, among conservatives as well as liberals, for aiding "third forces" against authoritarian regimes, as a general policy. As the "Philippines corollary," the idea has even been incorporated by some into an extended version of the "Reagan Doctrine." It has several things going for it: the ideological and moral appeal of helping the good guys; an escape from a "narrow" concentration on anti-Communism; the potential for arousing bipartisan support and for restoring a much-longed-for consensus in U.S. foreign policy; and the promise that, as there is allegedly a global "democratic revolution" in progress, it will be in harmony with the times.

Second, though someone depending exclusively on American media coverage of recent events might be forgiven for thinking otherwise, the Philippines does not exist in a void, nor exclusively in terms of its relations with the United States. It has neighbors, it belongs to a region. More particularly, it is a member of an important and successful regional organization: the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose other members are Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Brunei.

It would be unrealistic to expect that what has happened in the Philippines will have no effect on these countries. It would also be unrealistic to expect that some American enthusiasts for "third forces" will not, in any case, target some of the ASEAN countries for treatment. Indeed, they have already started to do so: A. M. Rosenthal, the executive editor of the *New York Times*, has recently urged that America should bring leverage and pressure to bear on, among others, Indonesia, in the interest of promoting political freedom.

He has a case. As far as corruption is concerned, Indonesia's President Suharto is in the same league as Marcos. In terms of ruthlessness he is in altogether a higher one. Hundreds of thousands—perhaps as many as a million—have perished violently in Indonesia since Suharto seized effective control in 1965. Most were killed in massacres (which may or may not have been carried out spontaneously by anti-Communist villagers) following the abortive coup of that year, and in the process of imposing Indonesian rule over Timor, following the withdrawal of the Portuguese. But there have also been recent killings by government-controlled "death squads."

Conditions in the other ASEAN countries are not anything like as bad as they are in Indonesia, but, by the standards now being applied by many Americans, they are not very good either. In Thailand the military plays a dominant role. In Malaysia there is serious economic discrimina-

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tion, sanctioned by law, against the large Chinese minority and the government is attracted to Islamic fundamentalism. Lee Kuan Yew controls Singapore's press and intellectuals with a firm hand and tolerates little genuine opposition. And as these are among the most economically advanced countries in the Third World, with well-developed middle classes, they offer more convincing prospects of viable democratic "third forces" than most.

So they are ideal targets for an American policy of promoting democracy by pressuring authoritarian governments to reform, right? Well, no actually. Consider the recent history of the countries. Two decades ago they were rightly seen as amongst the most unstable and vulnerable in the world: internally divided, weakly governed, economically stagnant, threatened by subversion and insurrection. Around this time, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. wrote with justification of "an underdeveloped subcontinent filled with fictitious states in vague, chaotic and unpredictable revolutionary ferment." Indonesia had the largest Communist movement in the world outside the Soviet bloc and China, an inflation rate of over 600 percent, and one of the most radical and anti-Western governments in the world. (Sukarno's "To hell with your aid!" was still ringing in American ears.) Malaysia was coping with the remnants of a serious Communist guerrilla movement. The capacity of Singapore even to survive seemed dubious, given that it had absolutely no resources (not even its own drinking water) and a racially divided population. Communist China to the north and North Vietnam to the east, both countries with formidable armies, presented external threats which the region was ill equipped to meet. As well, with Sukarno's Indonesia in a confrontational mood and the union between Malaysia and Singapore having broken up, relations among the countries themselves were far from good. All in all a sorry picture.

Then quite suddenly and unexpectedly, just about the time Schlesinger's words were published in 1967, they began to get their act together, and in a few years both the reality and image of the region had changed radically. The defeat of the Communists and the fall of Sukarno in Indonesia removed a major source of trouble-making. ASEAN was formed in 1968 and regional cooperation began to flourish. Economic growth rates varying from good to absolutely spectacular were achieved and maintained through the 1970s. Governments became more efficient, and internal order and stability were established. In the course of a decade, what had been one of the world's principal areas of instability became and remains one of its great success stories, in most ways a model for the rest of the Third World. All this was achieved with little outside help or interference. In fact, one of the features of ASEAN as an organization has been suspicion and hostility toward such interference.

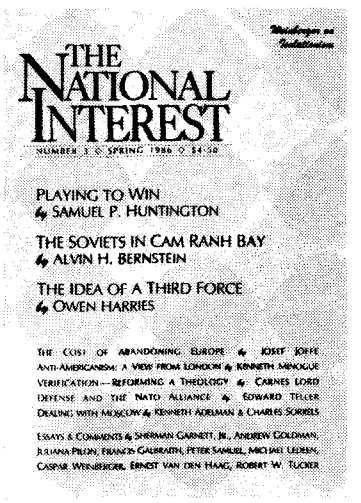
What the ASEAN countries have managed is an incredible achievement. Take Indonesia, the most likely target for American reformist zeal. It is a huge country: superimpose it on a map of Europe and it stretches from Ireland to the Caspian Sea. It is made up of 13,500 islands. It has a population of 170 million. Before it achieved independence in 1949, its only experience as a united political entity was under Dutch colonial rule, which did not go in much for apprenticeship in self-government. Twenty-one years ago it was in political and economic shambles. In these circumstances it seems less surprising that the country is today under authoritarian rule than that it is still in one piece.

There is one other thing to be said about Indonesia and the other ASEAN countries. Strategically they are both important and vulnerable. They control the passage between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, which is vital for Japan and other countries of northeast Asia, as well as for the U.S. Navy. Three Western countries have fought major military actions in Southeast Asia since World War II, and currently the Soviet Union thinks it important enough to spend about $2 billion a year it can ill afford to support a client state there. It is a matter of great concern to the Chinese that the region should not fall under the domination of another great power. At the same time, and despite their economic success, the ASEAN countries are militarily weak, while, in Vietnam, they have a neighbor that possesses one of the world's most powerful fighting machines, is ambitious, and is very poor. This juxtaposition of weak, prosperous countries and a strong, poor one is intrinsically dangerous.

Given all this—the still recent history of instability and backwardness, the success against all odds in overcoming it, the strategic importance of the region, the Vietnam factor—it would be insanely dangerous and irresponsible for the United States to heed the advice of those who, in the name of freedom and democracy, now urge it to press change on the governments of the region. Such intervention would be much more likely to endanger the hard-won gains of the last two decades, and to result in a return to the conditions of the 1960s, than it would be to further the cause of democracy.

There may be countries in the world where it would make sense (i.e., where it would serve America's national interest) to destabilize friendly authoritarian governments. But it is an activity that should be undertaken only after very careful deliberation, a close examination of the particular circumstances, and a clear sense of what it is likely to lead to. This is something that one would expect conservatives, at least, to understand in their bones. That many of them evidently do not is a cause for deep concern about both American conservatism and the prospects for American foreign policy. One can only hope that Ambassador Wolfowitz will succeed in keeping Senators Laxalt and Lugar well away from Jakarta. □

The Ultimate Neoconservative Weapon★



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Jim Courter and Gregory A. Fossedal

THE MILITARY-CONGRESSIONAL COMPLEX

Reforming military reform.

Congress and the President are rushing to enact what proponents are pleased to describe as a series of major reforms in the way the Pentagon builds weapons. Most follow on the advice of President Reagan's commission on procurement reform, headed by defense industrialist David Packard: reshuffle the Joint Chiefs of Staff, create a new procurement czar, and increase the amount of "planning" and "stability" at the Pentagon. Contrary to the rhetoric, however, these proposals are not, as many describe them, "sweeping."

And that is because all these reforms, some good and some bad, fail to confront the single greatest problem in weapons procurement: the growth of a slow, unresponsive bureaucracy that builds weapons, the Military-Congressional Complex. Simply put, there are too many cooks stirring the weapons broth.

Ironically, this edifice was erected in an attempt to crack down on waste. Its growth began in the 1950s, accelerated rapidly in the 1960s under Robert McNamara, and has continued ever since through more than a dozen "sweeping" reforms—including two while Mr. Packard was an official in the Pentagon, and at least four more during the Reagan years: the Carlucci initiatives of 1981, the Grace Commission reforms of 1984, and the congressional measures of 1984 and 1985. Each time, the idea was to institute some practice that was perceived to be lacking: tougher testing, more competition, less bickering between the services, and on and on. Each time, however, the unintended result was identical: more staffers, in the Pentagon and Congress.

In the 1950s, for example, it was decided that there was too much "duplication" in buying common items used by all the services: paper clips, pencils, and so on. So the services set up eight offices to coordinate block purchases of many such items, and did in fact achieve some success. Secretary McNamara decided, however, that progress had not been quick enough. In 1961 he ordered the creation of a Defense Supply Agency, later the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), to pull together the disparate effort. Thus, starting as a small, innovative idea within the services, central purchasing became a major agency. Today the Defense Logistics Agency employs more than 50,000 people. Its catalogue of items for joint purchase, and hundreds of concomitant regulations for their procurement, run to thousands of pages.

The results? In the fall of 1983, the Pentagon bought a toilet seat for $618. Later that year, Navy personnel purchased a pair of diodes, which go for about 25 cents at your local Radio Shack, for $110 apiece. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger crowed that the horror stories had been discovered "by Department of Defense auditors."

What Mr. Weinberger failed to note is that these prices were paid by the very Complex that later, by luck, discovered them. The Navy officers who bought the $110 diodes, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported in a 1985 editorial, were simply following procedures, running their estimates by such bureaucracies as the DLA, the Small Business Office, the Office of Installation Services, the Defense Contract Administrative Services Regional Office, and the Cameron Station Administrative Support Center. The $600 toilet seat was bought directly by DLA agents empowered to make such purchases to prevent fraud and duplication by the services.

The DLA is but one example of a good idea turned sour. In 1962, a Harvard panel on procurement reform said that many weapons programs were plagued by "gold-plating" with unneeded technology, while a 1970 panel set up under Defense Secretary Melvin Laird cited "cost overruns" as a major cause and effect. As a remedy to such problems, Mr. McNamara set up (and his successors expanded) a new array of reporting requirements and internal audits, and hired the employees to carry them out. The Department of Defense now employs 225,000 full-time civilians to work on procurement. They busily estimate the proper price for a centrally purchased diode, or scrutinize another bureaucrat's estimate, or report to still another bureaucrat on the activities of the first two.

One office that generates such reports is the Defense Contract Audit Agency, charged with scrutinizing contractor claims on contracts: "Did the company really spend this much on that kind of steel? Does it cost that much to ship the load from Cleveland to Detroit?" And so on. In 1966, the DCAA consisted of a staff of about 250 persons, who rapidly checked major systems for possible fraud or overruns. Today, the DCAA employs 4,600 people; its employees take 60 to 100 days or more to complete checks and double-checks of the most obscure contract provisions, including what sort of vacation and insurance benefits companies offer their employees. DCAA auditors roam through industry offices at will and, like Internal Revenue agents, may actually impose penalties without due process.

One industry employee, who asked that his name be withheld, put it this way: "Today . . . government contractors are told the color and gender of employees to be hired, how much they are to be paid, and how long they can work. Non-service contracts include provisions directing that certain components must be of American manufacture, regardless of cost."

Each waste-and-fraud checker work-

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ing for a congressman or central agency is able to generate hundreds of hours of work with a mere phone call. Thus, in 1984, Congress decided it needed "more competition" in defense contracting. Now, between 50 and 60 percent of major contracts are awarded on a competitive basis. But just to make sure, Congress mandated the hiring of "competition advocates." Today, every weapons program has at least one, just as each major program has its own equal opportunity employment officer, its own small business office, and its own public affairs and legislative liaison specialists. In the Air Force Logistics Command alone—one branch of one service—there are more than 2,000 "competition advocates."

Congress is thus a driving force behind the growth in Pentagon staff. In 1970, Congress requested 36 reports from the Pentagon; by 1984, the number jumped to 458 reports. Six-hundred and fifty programs were changed in the appropriations process in 1970; almost 1,900 were so changed in 1985. In 1984 congressional offices wrote 85,000 letters and made 590,000 phone calls to the enormous and growing staffs of the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Service Liaison offices.

Most of this congressional management is well intentioned, but much is not. In 1985, for example, Congress added $5 billion in spending not requested by the Defense Department, by one estimate, and perhaps $10 billion, according to Weinberger aide Lawrence Korb. Many of these additions reflected simple pork-barreling, the protecting of bases or programs located in a congressman's district. Others are the imposition of a congressman's arms control or social agenda. Congress mandates, for example, the use of Defense Department aircraft for transporting burros and horses from military installations—but rules out using dogs and cats to study the effects of various kinds of ammunition. The Navy is not allowed to use certain kinds of paint until approved by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Do the savings produced by the Complex match its costs? Secretary Weinberger claims that his expanded waste-and-fraud army will save the Pentagon more than $10 billion this year, or about 10 cents for every procurement dollar. Yet the cost of the central defense agencies and the Office of the Secretary of Defense alone will be $16 billion in 1986. And for each such readily identifiable, centralized bureaucrat, the increased reporting demanded by OSD and the Congress has necessitated the hiring of thousands of others. In addition to the 225,000 civilian employees working on procurement, there is probably an equal number of military officers conducting procurement for the Pentagon as well, for a total of more than 400,000 shoppers.[1] Many of these are spread from program to program; for example, according to the former head of the MX missile program, almost half his staff was busy working not on the MX itself, but on responses to congressional and Pentagon inquiries, reports, and other red tape. If we assume that the support and feeding of those 400,000 shoppers costs an average of $40,000 per year—in salary, benefits, office and operating expenses, and so on—then we must add at least another $15 billion to the price tag of the Military-Congressional Complex.

And all this leaves out the impact on private weapons makers. Former Weinberger aide Paul Thayer estimates that out of every dollar private industry spends on weapons, 40 cents is spent complying with paperwork requirements and other regulations not related to performance.

According to the former head of the MX missile program, almost half his staff was busy working not on the MX itself, but on responses to congressional and Pentagon inquiries, reports, and other red tape.

This may be the greatest cost of all imposed by the Military-Congressional Complex: a brow-beaten weapons industry, blasted by charges of fraud and written off as guilty until proven innocent. Despite rapid growth in the defense budget, employment in defense-related industries has barely risen since 1961. From 1967 to 1980, the number of aerospace companies actually declined, to 3,000 from 6,000. Last year, the U.S. fell behind France in Third World weapons sales; this may cheer some, but it hardly speaks well for our weapons industry. Despite stories of individual abuse, contractor profits may be too low, as Pentagon reports in 1970 and 1985 showed.

Meanwhile, talented minds are encouraged to avoid the defense industry altogether. As with the oil industry in the 1970s, defense contractors are a demoralized lot. Half are under investigation for some sort of fraud—an indication not that the industry suddenly has been overrun with cheaters, but that it is under a burdensome assault from the Complex. Some, like General Electric, fight back, and prove that charges of fraud against them are false. But their vindication is little noted. So most others simply give in, while some learn to like regulation and the security it gives big businesses that can afford to pay for high-priced lobbyists and influence-peddlers.

The tragedy here is that all these actors—Congress, contractors, and the Pentagon—have generally good intentions. Alexander Flax, head of a 1975 panel on reform, put it well: "Acquisition management problems . . . arise from well-motivated but inappropriate and largely ineffectual attempts to compensate . . . for failings in the military departments and program offices in the detailed execution of weapon systems acquisition programs."

The solution is a drastic reduction in the Military-Congressional Complex. Programs could then be the responsibility of a single, lean staff of officers who would not need to be harassed by dozens of committees and agencies: they would know that the rewards for success, and the penalties for failure, would be focused on them. Without such a reduction, by contrast, it becomes impossible to focus responsibility—either to punish failure or to reward success. Who shall we blame for, say, the design of the MX missile or the Divad anti-tank weapon? The development, design, and testing of each was spread out over ten to twenty-five years. Congress took dozens of votes and intervened every time to mandate specific changes in the program or the weapon itself. Several different officers headed each program, issuing dozens of reports to several different defense secretaries. And all of these officials were working with several private contractors and sub-contractors.

Such costs, delays, and diffusions of responsibility are not inevitable. France has nothing comparable to our unwieldy Complex; she builds weapons with a central staff of a few hundred people. So did the United States before the frenzy of ad hoc reforms that began in the 1960s. Today successful U.S. businesses are abandoning centralized control methods and instead offering incentives for performance to their employees.

In one hopeful sign, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted this spring to reduce by 16,000 the number of employees in various central defense agencies, and enact cuts of a similar scale, about 20 percent, in the number of congressional hearings, reports, and oversight committees. Unfortunately, more ambitious proposals were voted down. And the Administration, led by Secretary Weinberger, has opposed elimination of the Defense Logistics Agency and other dinosaurs. The committee's measures are well short of the significant change that is needed. But they point, at least, in the right direction—something that the military reform debate, both for and against, has failed to do for some time. □

THE GROWING MILITARY-CONGRESSIONAL COMPLEX

	1961	1972	1985
(1) Number of central defense agencies	2	8	11
(2) Number of employees working for (1)	3,341	61,000	86,000
(3) Congressional committees and sub-committees with defense oversight	4	8	34
(4) Number of employees working for (3)	840	N/A	3,000
(5) Private sector employment in defense-related industry	2.1 million	2.6 million	2.6 million

Source: Annual posture statements by the Secretary of Defense, and Annual Guide to the Congress. The 1985 figure for employment in defense-related industry is an estimate from the Congressional Research Service.

[1]The Department of Defense keeps no precise statistics, but in general, civilian employment is about half that of active duty personnel. Civilians, however, are more concentrated in support and procurement functions.

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David Evanier

ADOLF'S FRIEND AT THE U.N.

And we're not talking about Kurt Waldheim.

Consider for a moment Ma'aruf-al-Dawalibi, president of the World Muslim Congress. The congress participated in the U.N. North American Regional NGO [Non-Governmental Organization] Symposium on the Question of Palestine last July. In 1984, Dawalibi spoke at a U.N. seminar at Geneva entitled, "The Encouragement of Understanding and Respect in Matters Relating to Freedom of Religion and Belief." He told the seminar he had read at least sixteen French books when he studied in Paris during World War II which proved that the Talmud, the Jewish religious book of law, teaches that "if a Jew does not drink every year the blood of a non-Jewish man, then he will be damned for eternity." Dawalibi explained that each year Jews kidnap and slaughter a non-Jewish boy. He told a little tale about a barber whom the Jews ordered to kill a priest and the priest's servant and to gather their blood. The barber "admitted to have killed him and gathered his blood. . . .

He was then asked about what happened with the bodies and he admitted to have cut them in pieces, put them in sacks. . . . They went to the field and found in the river the skull and various members. . . . [The barber] then added that a Jewish physician is not allowed to give a true medicine to someone who is not Israelite to the exclusion of medical experiments in the same way it is done with dogs. . . . And the barber stressed that this is the viewpoint of the Jewish religion to the non-Israelite. He then brought up another part of the Talmud which says that the whole world is the property of Israel and that the wealth, the blood and the souls of the non-Israelites are Israel's. This, Mister Chairman, this belief is the reason which has caused the discrimination and oppression against the Jews since the era of Nebuchadussor to the era of Israel.

James Finn, principal U.S. participant in the Geneva seminar and editor of Freedom House's *Freedom at Issue*, promptly protested Dawalibi's remarks at the time. He told me, "The whole thing was astounding. At the end Dawalibi said we have to ask *why* Hitler killed the Jews. As if that were a perfectly sensible question with a rational answer."

The Board of Global Ministries at the United Methodist Church had a delegate at the U.N. symposium, but no one would tell me who it was.

Take Robert McClean, Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church. Since McClean said he had not taken part in the symposium, but that the church's Board of Global Ministries had, I asked him who I could speak to at the Board of Global Ministries. Who was the delegate?

He replied, "I think you'll just have to find that out for yourself. I just don't feel like being very nice, when you're obviously making trouble."

In reaction to my reading to him over the phone Dawalibi's remarks about the drinking of blood, he said: "I don't know about that."

"But what is your response?"

"I don't know. Just because you say he said it . . . you know, what I'm saying is, these are large, this is sorta like, well, what would they be in Christian or Jewish terms? What would they be? This would be sorta like . . . the . . . gosh, I don't know . . . American Jewish Congress would be similar . . . New Rabbinical Association . . . You're not dealing with some Johnny-come-lately or what have you here. . . . It's like writing an article about the Vatican."

"If provided with the documentation, would you speak out against them?"

"You're making the judgment. . . . If the documentation were from The American Spectator *I would think this is a bunch of nonsense. Misinformation, disinformation, and probably damn lies. . . . The publication you say you're representing is one of the least respectable journals, one of the smeariest sheets that is printed in the United States. It doesn't say much about your character either."*

I called the U.N. office of the United Methodist Church and spoke to its director, Mia Adjali. She would not give me the name of the delegate from the Board of Global Ministries either. She would, however, forward my request to the delegate in due course, and if the delegate wished to contact me, perhaps she would.

"I am not allowed to give out names of representatives," she said.

"You mean there is no one at the Board of Global Ministries who will discuss this subject?"

"I don't know what it is that you want to discuss. I will send her a copy of your newspaper and ask her if she wants to be interviewed by you. I doubt very much she's heard of it. . . . I can't imagine why it's important for us to answer questions about the World Muslim Congress. That is not our organization."

NGOs are private groups which have been granted advisory status with the U.N.'s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to serve as adjuncts to the official diplomacy—in effect, as propaganda arms—of the U.N. According to the U.N. rules governing the NGOs, they are "to promote the aims, objectives, and purposes of the U.N. and further the understanding of its work." The Council has urged the Secretary-General in his administrative capacity to "exclude all those organizations whose aims or practices tend or contribute to the propagation of Nazi ideology and racial and/or religious discrimination."

The NGO committee of ECOSOC meets once a year to certify or re-certify the status of NGOs. Once certified by

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ECOSOC, NGOs receive access to U.N. facilities. Their members can eat in the U.N. restaurants, sit in the lounge, mingle with U.N. delegates. They can consult and lobby. The NGOs' status with the U.N. gives them a prestige they would not have as individual groups and gives their declarations a certain public relations value—in this case redounding to the benefit of such organizations as the PLO.

Since the 1970s, Soviet international front groups have played a key role in the coordination of NGO activities. (One of these, the Christian Peace Conference, participated in last July's symposium.) National affiliates of Soviet fronts have also become involved. Among the groups present at the symposium were Women for Racial and Economic Equality, an activist group whose leaders include prominent Communist Party USA members, and the National Conference of Black Lawyers, which is affiliated with the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (identified by the State Department as a Soviet front).

The World Muslim Congress holds status as a Category I NGO, the highest available. This category is reserved for world-wide, as distinct from national, organizations. The World Peace Council also holds Category I status. Presumably such groups have international standing.

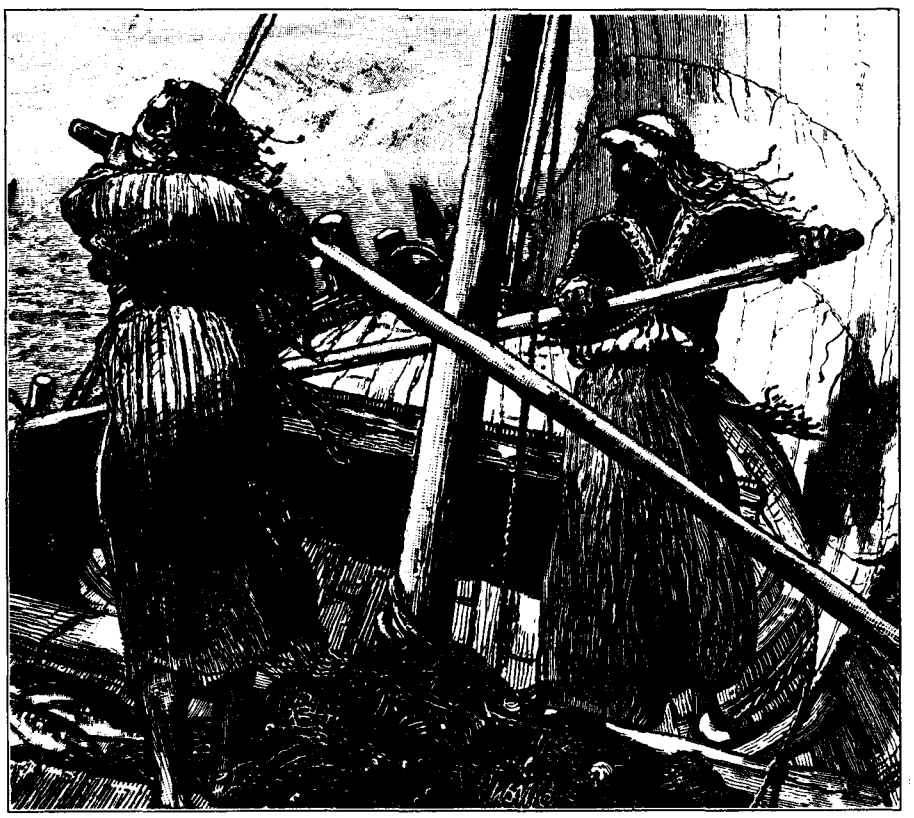
In 1985 the World Muslim Congress joined with forty-two other NGOs at the U.N. to plan their annual anti-Israel campaign in the United States and Canada. The three-day symposium at U.N. headquarters in New York was sponsored by the U.N. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

A decision taken by the Committee in 1982 initiated the formation of a pro-PLO body of NGOs. The Committee, which was formed at the time the 1975 "Zionism is Racism" resolution was adopted, sought collaboration with organizations representing a broad spectrum of interests to gain access to the local populations represented by the NGOs and shape their thinking on the Middle East. Savitri Kunadi, India's permanent representative to the U.N., and a member of the Committee, said at the 1985 symposium that the NGOs have been regarded from their inception "as a valuable asset in [the Committee's] struggle for Palestinian rights."

"The publication you say you're representing is one of the least respectable journals, one of the smeariest sheets that is printed in the United States."

Throughout the symposium, discussion focused on American public opinion, the U.S. media, and the role to be played by the NGOs in reshaping both toward a pro-Palestinian position. Zehdi Labib Terzi, the PLO's U.N. observer, expressing alarm at the "ignorance" of the American public on the Palestinian issue, urged "consciousness raising" techniques such as polls and surveys specifically designed to promote American identification with the Palestinian cause.

One of the World Muslim Congress's representatives at the symposium was Issa Nakhleh, an attorney who has served as U.N. Observer of the Arab Higher Committee for Palestine, and who, during the 1960s and early 1970s, was associated with the late Gerald L.K. Smith (writing for Smith's publication, *The Cross and the Flag*), and with the racist West Coast group, Western Front. In 1981 Nakhleh spoke at the Third Annual Convention of the Institute for Historical Review, a group that maintains that the Holocaust is a myth concocted by Jews. Nakhleh's address was called "Palestinians and Zionist Genocide."



"Those remarks are crazy," Ellen Siegel of the Washington Area Jews for Israeli-Palestinian Peace (a participant in the symposium) said in response to the Dawalibi quotes. "We're opposed to that stuff. It's not something we like to hear or want to hear or approve of. What do you want me to do? What should I do? . . ."

"Is such a group fit for NGO status?" I asked.

"I suppose not. . . . It's awful stuff. We don't want Arabs doing that. . . ."

In 1982 members of the U.S. Senate received packages in brown paper wrappers postmarked Pakistan but bearing no return address. The packages contained two books by William Grimstad. *The Six Million Reconsidered* attempts to prove that the Holocaust never occurred; *Antizion*, a compendium of anti-Semitic writing, includes a description of Hitler as a "twentieth century statesman" and the assertion, "There were no Jews killed in 'gas chambers.' " The edition of *Antizion* sent to the senators is a reproduction of one published by the Noontide Press of Torrance, California, which purveys racist and anti-Semitic books. Noontide is controlled by Willis Carto, head of the Liberty Lobby, which is widely regarded as anti-Semitic and which has recently been involved in litigation against *National Review* and William F. Buckley, Jr.

Grimstad also served as editor of *White Power*, the official publication of the neo-Nazi National Socialist White People's Party headed by George Lincoln Rockwell. In 1977 Grimstad registered with the Department of Justice as a Saudi agent. His registration form reported that the Saudi Embassy paid him $20,000 in June 1977 as a "gift or honorarium apparently in appreciation for my book, *Antizion*." He sent the embassy a receipt for the money.

An investigation by the Anti-Defamation League revealed that the books were mailed to the senators by the World Muslim Congress.

"You go to a conference," Ruth Sillman, U.N. representative of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, told me. "We're not working with them. You go to a conference. With lots of organizations. . . ."

"Dawalibi said—"

"Don't give it to me. I don't know about it. You're just quoting it. And I have a feeling that your motives are not very good. . . . What about the forty-two other NGOs? Are you calling them? . . . We do not support [Dawalibi's statement]. We do not approve it. In any way."

"What about the U.N. resolution that called on the Secretary-General to exclude NGOs which propagate 'Nazi ideology and racial and religious discrimination'? Would you support it?"

"That was not an official NGO action. . . . Every year, every single NGO at the U.N. is accredited by an official body. And if an organization is a Nazi group, they would not be approved."

"But don't you think that resolution was a proper one?"

"A group of people offered that resolution. I had nothing to do with it."

"But you're not for it?"

"I don't even remember. I may never have seen it. . . ."

"Well, the symposium is an annual event. What about the next one on Palestine? Would you support the resolution then?"

"Oh please, please—"

The World Muslim Congress is based in Karachi, Pakistan, where it was founded in 1949. For its first two decades, the congress was led by the late Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem. During World War II, in broadcasts he beamed to the Middle East from Berlin, where he then lived, he urged Arabs to join the Axis powers. Following the Mufti's death in 1974, Ma'aruf-al-Dawalibi took over as president of the congress. Dawalibi lives in the Saudi capital and is an adviser to King Khaled. Financial support for the congress is provided through the World Muslim League. Based in the holy city of Mecca, the World Muslim League was created in 1962 through a Saudi government grant as a principal instrument of its policy to put all Islamic institutions, including those outside the country, under its own auspices.

In 1981, Dawalibi had an audience with Pope John Paul II, during which they reportedly spoke about advancing the Christian-Muslim dialogue. Later that year, Dawalibi said in Paris that

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such dialogues were necessary because "international Jewry is undoubtedly behind the persistence of misunderstanding between Muslim and Christian and has disseminated deviation among Christian clergymen. . . . It is an indisputable fact that the Jews have succeeded in penetrating the highest offices in the Church." The World Muslim Congress is also treated by the World Council of Churches as a leading spokesman for the Muslim world and engages it in Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Dawalibi was quoted in *Time* on March 15, 1954, when he was defense minister of Syria, as saying, "The Arabs would prefer a thousandfold to become a Soviet republic than a prey to world Jewry." In 1983 the Anti-Defamation League unearthed four documents from the archives of the German Foreign Ministry that verify that Dawalibi served as the Paris agent of the Nazi party official in charge of Arab affairs, SS Obergruppenführer Erwin Ettel. The documents also disclose his close collaboration (as personal secretary) with the Grand Mufti in the latter's efforts in support of Hitler and the Axis powers.

"Most of my contact with the World Muslim Congress is through a loose coalition of religious NGOs," Roger Naumann of the Quaker U.N. office told me. "We meet together on a whole variety of subjects. Disarmament and one thing and another. . . ."

"But how does an organization like yours explain or justify working with a racist and neo-Nazi group?"

"Well, I know for a fact that what the guy said doesn't mean the organization is pro-Nazi. . . . You have to look at the organization as a whole; you can't just look at the single statements made by one individual. . . . Our purpose is mediation, bringing economic justice and peace in the world. We're not worried about what you or anybody else think about us."

"What do you mean by 'us'?"

"Hang on a moment. As you know, the Quakers worked enormously with the Jewish community in the years when the Jewish community were on their knees. We now are working with a whole range of other people who are on their knees. . . ."

The World Muslim Congress appeared in the pages of Willis Carto's *Spotlight* in July 1985, the same month that the symposium on Palestine was held at the U.N. In a letter to the editor, the general secretary of the congress, Inamullah Khan, wrote from Pakistan that he just wanted to express his appreciation for such an "excellent" publication. He wrote, "Your in-depth analysis is superb and clear-cut. Many of your stories are eye openers. . . ."

The third annual North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine will take place June 9-13 at the United Nations. Regional NGO conferences met in Turkey in April and Latin America in May. There will be another in Vienna this month, and the series will wind up with an international NGO conference in Geneva in August. The U.N.'s grand obsession rolls on. The World Muslim Congress remains an NGO. □

William Tucker

DOWN ON THE FARM

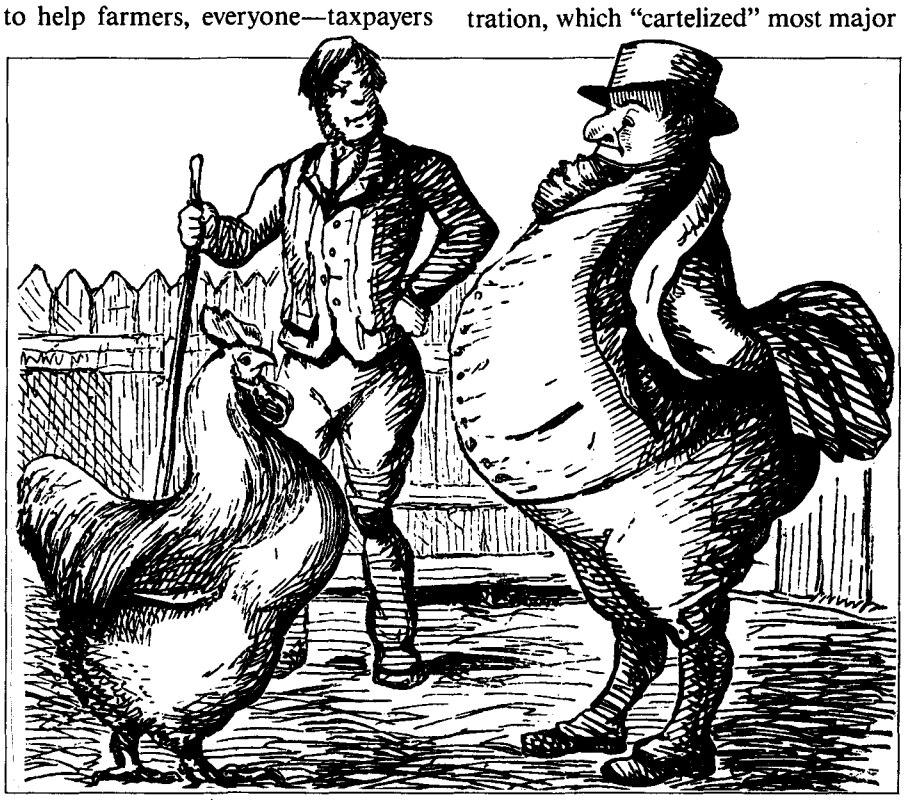
The government subsidizes a crisis.

Just about every week the television news carries another story. A farm family is forced off its homestead in the Midwest. A depressed farmer in Georgia shoots himself. A bitter farmer in Minnesota kills the banker who foreclosed on his farm last year. The nation's Farm Belt is in crisis. Inevitably the question is put: Why don't we give farmers more aid?

Then every once in a while the networks will get tough and analytical. Sure, we've done a lot to help farmers, said Dan Rather in a week-long special last March. Farm subsidies have now risen to $20 billion a year. But after all, shouldn't there be a limit? If the old-fashioned family farmers can't compete anymore, should people from other parts of the economy be forced to subsidize them?

Somehow this endless parade of stories never gets around to asking the key questions: Could it be possible that all the government programs are actually *hurting* farmers? Rather than preserving homesteads, could farm subsidies actually be *taking away* the advantages of the family farm? Is it possible that if we only stopped trying to help farmers, everyone—taxpayers and farmers alike—might be better off?

Farming is the only industry still operating under the New Deal. The original National Recovery Administration, which "cartelized" most major American industries, was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1935. By that time everyone—including Franklin Roosevelt—had realized that it wasn't such a great idea. There was no serious effort to revive it.



But agriculture fared differently. Under pressure from Roosevelt's court-packing scheme, the Supreme Court made its famous "switch in time" in 1937 and upheld the second Agricultural Adjustment Act. Thereafter, agriculture was completely regulated. Every basic farm program that operates today comes out of the New Deal. As a result, there is almost no form of farming today where the government is not the main player.

Start, for example, with the price support program operated by the Commodity Credit Corporation, a quasi-government agency. In a wide variety of field crops—corn, wheat, rice, cotton, barley, sorghum—the government guarantees farmers an artificially high price. If market prices fall below the "target" level, the government makes up the difference to farmers in the form of a "deficiency" payment. The market price of corn, for example, is now

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around $2.10 a bushel. This year's "target" price is $3 a bushel. As a result, farmers in the program will sell their corn at market value and the government will pay them the difference of 90 cents a bushel. The target price has no relation to wind, weather, or the price of cheese. It is just what the *political* market will bear.

This program is an "entitlement," like Social Security. There is no way of predicting what it is going to cost from year to year. In 1981, the cost to the Treasury was $2 billion. Last year it was $20 billion. Recently the Reagan Administration did succeed in capping the amount of a crop on which an individual farmer can collect. Thus, the program will probably not expand much further than it already has. But it won't cost less than $20 billion for some time, either.

Yet that is only the beginning. A second, almost equally expansive effort within the Commodity Credit Corporation is the non-recourse loan program. At the end of the growing season, farmers of various crops are given Treasury-rate loans. If the price of the crop doesn't reach an arbitrarily selected "loan rate," farmers don't have to repay the loans. They simply hand the crop over to the CCC. As of September 1985, the CCC was carrying loans of $12.5 billion—*off-budget*. In 1985 they made another $10.2 billion in loans. No one knows how many of these will ever be paid back.

To any student of freshman economics, this is all drearily familiar. It has to do with those simple supply-and-demand graphs that appear on page whatever-it-was in Paul Samuelson's textbook, *Economics*. Supply and demand can be represented as two curves that intersect at a point called "market price," or more accurately, "market-clearing price." When prices are left to adjust themselves, the desires of consumers and producers are brought into alignment, allocating resources in the most efficient way.

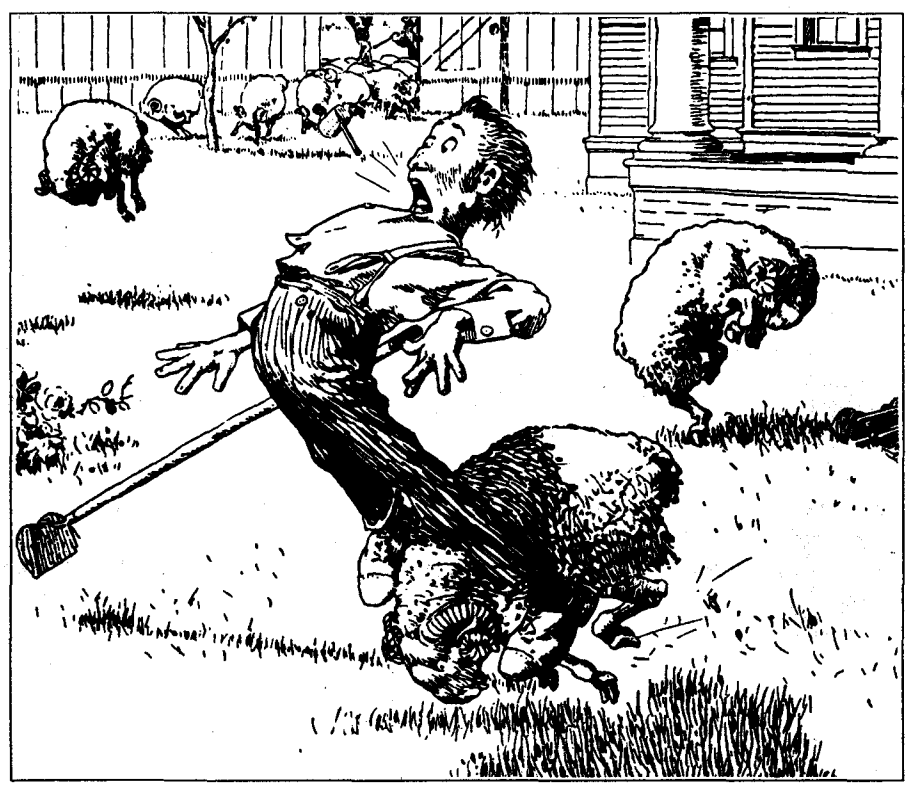
The problems begin when a coterie of producers or consumers convinces the government to set prices at a "just" or "fair" level. Producers always think "just" prices are quite a bit above market levels, of course, while consumers think they are quite a bit below. In terms of results, it hardly matters. Once prices are legislated, the two curves will no longer intersect. If prices are artificially high, two things will happen: producers will supply more, and consumers will buy less. The result is an economic "surplus"—as in "farm surplus." If prices are fixed artificially low—as we did with oil prices in the 1970s—consumers will consume more and producers supply less. The result will be a "shortage"—as in "oil shortage."

"American agriculture has essentially become a cornucopia of tax-shelters for people whose main income is in other sectors."

Target prices and all the other government price manipulations are the sole cause of farm surpluses, our chronic agricultural problem. Take milk, for example. Dairy farmers have their own special price support program that sets prices at about 110 to 115 percent above market levels. As a result, dairy farmers constantly produce more milk than the market can absorb. Once such surpluses gush forth, the government must become the "consumer of last resort" and buy up the surpluses. (Inversely, when price controls produce a shortage of a commodity like oil, the cry goes up that the government must become the *producer* of last resort and create its own oil company, or even nationalize the industry.)

The government's efforts to deal with our milk surpluses are legendary. Whole plants have been built just to turn these surpluses into cheese and powdered milk. Huge caves outside Kansas City are now being filled with enough of these products to stuff every man, woman, and child in the United States for the next two years. The stores grow bigger every day.

Similar surpluses have grown up in all the feed grains. For a while we stored our surplus corn and wheat on decommissioned World War II battleships. Then we started dumping them onto underdeveloped countries, until we found this only ruined Third World farming. The government eventually started renting space in Midwestern silos, and since the Payment in Kind (PIK) program it has been handing the surpluses back to the farmers. No one knows when, if ever, any of these supplies will be eaten by man or animal. The game now is who will pay the storage costs.



Outside of vegetable farming, there is not one major agricultural sector in the country where a farmer must put his seed in the ground in October or April without the knowledge that the government will be there to bail him out at the end of the season. But just as significant as government efforts to hold prices above market levels has been another set of programs designed to supply farmers with below-market credit.

The statistics are stark. Of the $210 billion in loans now held by farmers, exactly half have been extended by government or quasi-government agencies. The Farm Credit System—not to be confused with the Commodity Credit Corporation—holds the largest share at 29 percent. Another 13 percent have been made by the Farmer's Home Administration and 8 percent by the CCC. Commercial banks finance only 23 percent of farmers' debts, while 22 percent come from private lenders (usually the previous landowner) and 6 percent from life-insurance companies.

The Farm Credit System, almost unique to the farm economy, is one of those ambiguously named agencies like Ginny and Fanny Mae that may or may not be a part of the federal government. Originally funded out of the Treasury, it has since been turned over to the private sector. The system's $80 billion in loans have all been raised in Wall Street's private money markets. But because of the agency's history, investors tend to assume that it is still backed by the federal government. This misunderstanding allows the system to borrow at close to Treasury rates. And in fact, now that many of the Farm Credit System's debts have turned bad, Congress is acting to bail it out—proving that investors were right all along.

The Farmer's Home Administration is another lender of last resort. "You have to have been rejected by two other lenders before you can apply to the Administration," said Bob Thompson, assistant secretary of agriculture for economics. "They're always dealing with very marginal people. Traditionally the FHA is supposed to help young farmers who haven't had the chance to establish credit, but in practice few farmers have ever established themselves through FHA."

Thus, there is a tremendous amount of easy credit in the agricultural sector that is not available elsewhere in the economy. The result has been the most recent chapter in the on-going farm crisis—the "debt crisis." Although it is little noted, farmers today are actually making more money than ever. "Farm income has been at the highest level in our history over the last three years," said John Lee, director of the Economic Research Bureau of the Department of Agriculture. "It set a record at $39.5 billion in 1984 and will probably reach $43 billion in 1985 [about $30,000 per farm]. What we really have is a debt crisis that is concentrated among about 15-20 percent of all farmers."

When inflation started pushing up land prices in the 1970s, many farmers speculated heavily. Skyrocketing land values allowed them to roll over their debts each year by using their land as collateral. But when the Reagan Administration brought inflation under control, the bubble burst. Farmland prices have tumbled 31 percent throughout the country, and over 60 percent in parts of Iowa, Nebraska, and Minnesota. "All this hasn't meant any loss of production, however," said Mike Belongia, of the Federal Reserve Bank in St. Louis. "Two-thirds of all land transactions take place between farmers. When a farmer in Iowa goes under, his land is usually bought by another farmer who puts it right back into production."

One of the main causes of the "farm crisis," then, has been the unrealistical-

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ly easy, subsidized credit that has been made available to farmers.

The surplus production and land speculation are the predictable results of government manipulation of the market. What agricultural economists are now beginning to realize, however, is that this may be only the tip of the iceberg. A consensus is now emerging that, just as the oil price controls of the 1970s eventually pushed oil prices *above* their market levels, so the elaborate system of protections for farmers is actually pushing farm prices *below* their market level.

"It all has to do with risk," said the University of Chicago's D. Gale Johnson, a pioneer in the field of risk analysis. "The greater the perceived risk in any investment, the less capital it will attract. Likewise, the smaller the perceived risk, the more people will invest.

"The difficulty with farming is that so many of the risks have been reduced. All the tax advantages and government programs make investors perceive farming as essentially risk-free. As a result, farming is attracting too much capital. The more extra investment that goes into agriculture, the more surpluses we produce. And the more surpluses we produce, the more prices go down."

One of the most remarkable statistics floating around these days is the aggregate income that farmers declare for tax purposes. For 1983—the latest figures available—the whole agricultural sector reported a net loss of $10 billion, about $3,000 per farm.

"What these figures mean is that people are using farms to offset other sources of income," said Bob Thompson of the department of agriculture. "For an ordinary farmer the lowest income worth reporting is zero. That means you don't have to pay taxes. The $10 billion loss is being written off against other income. In fact, if the IRS taxed farmers at a rate of zero, the Treasury would gain $3 billion. American agriculture has essentially become a cornucopia of tax-shelters for people whose main income is in other sectors."

One of the most attractive features of "finance farming" is the seemingly innocuous law that allows farmers to keep their accounts in cash, rather than on an accrual basis. Major corporations cannot do this. The original purpose was to save unsophisticated farmers the trouble of having to keep complicated books. But it has become a major advantage for outside investors.

"Accrual bookkeeping means you have to make some attempt to match income with expenses," said John Lee of the Economic Research Service. "But with cash accounting you can bunch up your expenses at the start of an enterprise and declare huge losses. Then when the business starts making money you sell it and take the profits as a capital gain. The tax rates on capital gains, of course, are much lower than on income." Typically, an investment syndicate will build up an orchard, a vineyard, or a cattle ranch. (Buying shares in cattle ranches has always been very popular among movie stars, for some reason.) Planting the trees or building the feed lot will involve large initial outlays, creating big write-offs. When the operation begins to break even—usually within five years—it is sold off as a capital gain.

Of course these methods tend to produce their own equal and opposite reaction. During the 1970s, investors went wild setting up California citrus groves. Soon the market was flooded. So the citrus growers lobbied to have the tax advantages reduced to cut off further investment. That switched investment over to almond orchards where the same syndrome took place. Now the action has switched to other specialty crops.

In addition to cash accounting there are still other unique benefits that lobbying groups have been weaving into the tax code for decades. Hog-pens, cattle feedlots, orchards, and vineyards can all be depreciated in five years. Until the introduction of accelerated depreciation in 1982 most other industries operated on a fifteen-year schedule.

In accumulating tax advantages farmers have assumed they were only helping themselves. What they have failed to recognize, however, is that they are inviting other competitors into the industry. "It's very easy for investors to get into farming on a small scale," said D. Gale Johnson. "The local doctor or dentist can usually do it." Of course it might seem foolish to put money into a business that is already overloaded with surpluses—but then, what are government price-support programs for?

As a result, the farm economy has become hugely overcapitalized. "We recently looked at investment trends in farming from 1956 to 1978," said James Hrubovcak of the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. "Our conclusion was that 20 percent of agricultural investment over that period was made solely for tax purposes. Farming is no longer something that is done solely to raise crops. People are crowding into the business because of all its special advantages and protections."

And they keep coming. In 1972, some Southern farmers suffered damage from Hurricane Agnes. Congress responded by setting up the Disaster Payments Program, the DPP. Originally intended to protect against "acts of God," it quickly came to be used to offset the traditional risks of farming land highly prone to erosion. Since the nineteenth century, the scrubby sagebrush lands of West Texas and the High Plains in Colorado and Wyoming were always regarded as too fragile for "sod-busting." Instead they were put into cattle grazing or left unused. With federal disaster insurance, however, these marginal lands became accessible. Over the last decade more than 10 million acres of highly erodable land in West Texas and the Sand Hills of Nebraska have been plowed under for wheat and corn. The land often gives out in less than five years. Yet with government crop insurance, plus the price supports, plus the tax advantages, it pays off. As one Wyoming rancher recently told the *New York Times*: "These new people out here aren't really farming the land anymore. They're just farming the government subsidies."

Just as the oil price controls of the 1970s eventually pushed oil prices *above* their market levels, so the elaborate system of protections for farmers is actually pushing farm prices *below* their market level.

Perhaps the most monumental subsidy in our nation's history has been the Western irrigation programs carried out over the last half-century by the Bureau of Land Management and the Army Corps of Engineers. Under Theodore Roosevelt's Conservation Program the federal government took responsibility for developing Western water resources in order to promote settlement. Tax revenues were funneled in from other parts of the country. These programs have never flagged—even when people began flocking to the Sun Belt.

"Large portions of California have been settled almost entirely around the federal water programs," said Zack Willey, an economic consultant with the Environmental Defense Fund who has been working to introduce market mechanisms to California water projects. "None of this has been based on economics. The marginal price of water in the San Joaquin Valley is now $600 per acre-foot, yet the Bureau of Land Management still sells it to farmers for as little as $3 an acre-foot. These projects were supposed to be self-supporting, but probably no more than 20 percent of the capital expenditure has ever been repaid to the Treasury."

Much of the nation's cotton industry has now abandoned the Old South and migrated to federally irrigated lands in Arizona and California. In Northern California, subsidized water is being used to grow rice—which requires putting whole fields under water. Even more remarkable, an incredible 30 percent of California's state water production is now used to irrigate *pasture* land. This completely uneco-

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nomical practice competes successfully with livestock operations in the Midwest. "If farmers and ranchers had to pay anywhere near the market price for water, most of California's cattle production would be gone very quickly," said Willey. "The same is probably true for corn and wheat. California's only real economic advantage is in growing vegetables and produce."

So there you have it—America's oldest and largest industry now almost completely rebuilt around government subsidies. What would happen if we scrapped this whole maze of entitlements upon entitlements and went back to some normal pattern of development?

"It's a question a lot of people are beginning to ask," said John Lee of the USDA. "Obviously, there would be some initial dislocation. Production patterns would probably shift around the country to a more economical alignment. But the long-run results would be healthy. Investors would see more risk in farming and production would fall. As a result, farm prices would firm up. There would be fewer oversupplies, although we would probably have more fluctuation from year to year."

Some sectors almost certainly wouldn't survive without protection. Agricultural economists usually point to the domestic sugar industry, which is insulated from a world market where prices are only one-third as high. "We probably wouldn't grow much sugar cane or sugar beets," said Zeke Pasour of North Carolina State University. Dairy products would face similar competition.

But would it mean the end of American agriculture? Certainly not. We still have enormous economic advantages, both in the domestic and world markets. Food prices would rise, making farming profitable for real farmers. Consumers would pay higher prices in some instances, but would more than make up for it on taxes. Twenty billion dollars in farm subsidies amounts to $100 a year for every man, woman, and child in America.

One other thing is certain. The major beneficiary would be that sacred American institution: the family farm. The great irony about the federal orchestration of agriculture has been that nearly all the programs work against family farms and in favor of larger units. California's agriculture—which has replaced so much Southern and Midwestern farming—has been built almost entirely around large corporate farms. (California farming, by the way, pays almost no income tax.) Most support payments also end up in the hands of large farmers. A recent *New York Times* story included this remarkable quote from a Texas oil executive who was "farming corn subsidies" in a large-scale corporate effort in Nebraska. "We come up here looking for about twelve percent on our investment," he said. "But to tell the truth, without federal programs we couldn't do it. When there's a guy out there who just wants to live on the land and provide all his own labor, and who only wants to make about 4 or 5 percent on his money every year, there's basically no way we can compete against him."

The way to solve the farm problem, then, is to stop helping farmers. One big step would be to change the tax structure so that it no longer encouraged overinvestment in agriculture. A neutral tax code—which is what the Administration wants in tax reform—would be the best thing. But if that can't be done, the incentives designed to spur capital investment in other industries should at least be eliminated for farming.

The most important thing is to leave farmers alone to do what they do best—grow crops and raise animals on their own land. Agriculture is too complex and important to be managed by Washington. Farming should be left to the farmers. □

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a short test*. . . .

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2	astounding	b	New York Times
3	sassy . . . must reading	c	Lynn Nofziger (man of few words)
4	an impressive paper	d	R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. (TAS editor)
5	impressive	e	P. Kolk
6	90.2% . . . read The Review	f	Newsweek
7	sophisticated & professional	g	Amos Tuck School of Business
8	energetic & vital	h	George Will
9	delighted	i	Dudley Clendenin (New York Times)
10	provocative	j	John Steel (Dartmouth Trustee)
11	has succeeded	k	The New Republic
12	good rag	l	William F. Buckley

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BEHIND ETHIOPIA'S HUNGER

by Robert D. Kaplan

It is one of the longest-running conflicts of our time, fought with state-of-the-art Soviet hardware and involving tens of thousands of casualties. Hospitals are bombed, wells poisoned. Crops are burned by government soldiers in the midst of famine; anti-government guerrillas live in underground cities to protect themselves from aerial attack. For many years, the Communist government controlled little more than the major roads and towns in the northern provinces where the principal rebellions are taking place. As in Afghanistan, the Soviets are deeply committed in support of the government. The only missing element is the American media, which has managed to provide exhaustive coverage of the famine while virtually ignoring the savage fighting that lurks in the background, fighting that in many respects is the cause of the hunger.

Area diplomats say they are baffled by the absence of American coverage of even the most dramatic recent events of Ethiopia's civil war. On January 14, for example, in the northern province of Eritrea, commandos of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) launched an attack against the air base at Asmara, the government-held Eritrean provincial capital, used by the Americans until 1977 and since then by the Soviets. As many as forty Russian-built aircraft—MIG-23's among them—were damaged or destroyed, according to Western diplomatic sources.

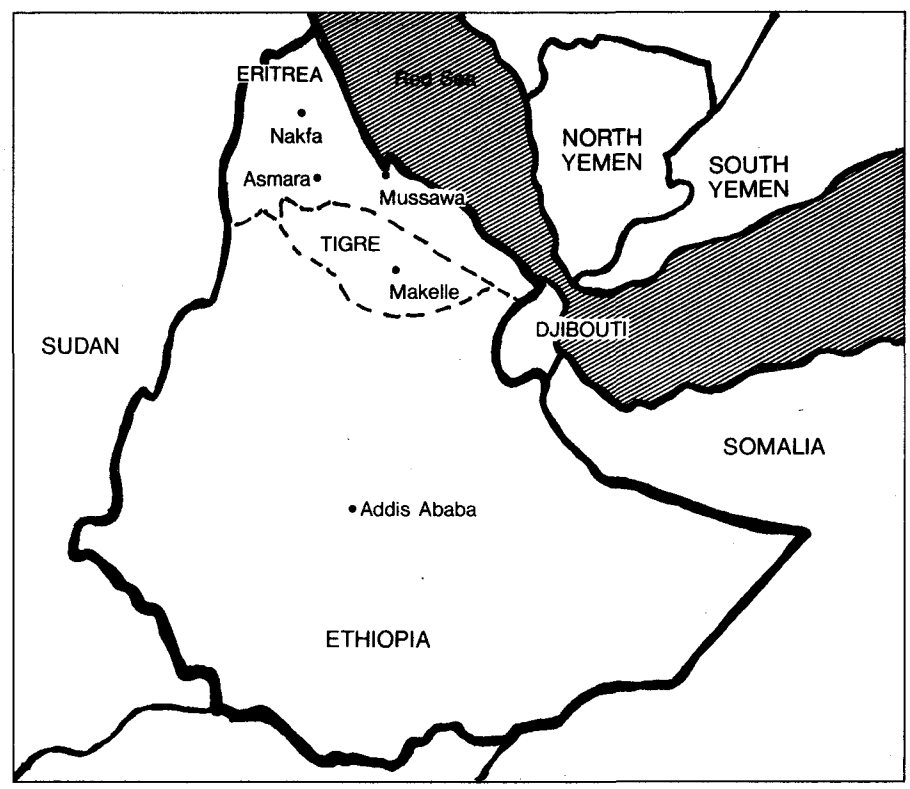
Not to be outdone, between midnight and 3 a.m. on February 8, the Tigre People's Liberation Front (TPLF) broke open the Makelle jail in central Tigre, also in the northern region of Ethiopia. The TPLF claimed 1800 prisoners were freed. While not disputing that claim, Western diplomats confirm that at least 700 prisoners escaped, many of them political prisoners of the Ethiopian regime for more than a decade. The break was accomplished by staging two diversionary attacks, one on the Makelle airfield and another on one of the roads leading out of town, which had the effect of drawing off two *Dergue* (government) brigades: an operation of great cunning and dramatic execution. In America, where taxpayers have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into famine relief in the very region of the fighting, both events went unreported.

Makelle, the site of the prison break, stands as a symbol of how the media have ignored a conflict specifically labeled by President Reagan, in his speech at the United Nations last fall, as one of the handful of superpower flashpoints around the globe. Hundreds of journalists have flown into Makelle airfield, enroute to visiting nearby famine relief camps. The airfield is studded with Soviet helicopter gunships, used by the Addis Ababa regime in its war against the Tigrean and Eritrean rebels. Yet few Western visitors have written about the war. During a visit to Makelle in June 1985, the singer Harry Belafonte was told by officials of the *Dergue*'s Relief and Rehabilitation Committee that food was being delivered all over the province of Tigre. In fact, large sections of Tigre haven't been in government hands for more than ten years. Just miles away from where Belafonte stood, *Dergue* troops had instead been burning crops and bombing market stalls a few weeks before, in the course of capturing the town of Abi Adi from the TPLF. Like other Americans, Belafonte's USA for Africa entourage was largely ignorant of the war, except as a vague presence far less interesting than the famine. But one cannot be understood separately from the other.

War has disrupted Ethiopia's entire agricultural pattern: it has destroyed crops, sparked mass migrations of peasant farmers into Sudan and Somalia, and siphoned off valuable resources—especially trucks—from the famine relief effort. Moreover war, rather than drought, is behind the infamous resettlement scheme of the Marxist government. According to *Médecins sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders), a French relief group, and the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Cultural Survival, the resettlement has resulted in 50,000 to 100,000 deaths. Interviews with Tigrean refugees in the Damazine camp in eastern Sudan indicate that the real purpose of resettlement is to depopulate strategic swaths of territory where rebels are active.

Yet the various civil conflicts lacerating northern Ethiopia may be too complex to excite an American audience. Neither the Ethiopian government nor the Tigrean and Eritrean guerrillas have permitted journalists into the region during an offensive. And traveling with the rebels between offensives, as I have, requires weeks away from one's base and telex, and the ability to endure bad food and little sleep. In addition, the fact that the rebels—like the government—are themselves Marxists, takes the sting out of the story. How can you tell the good guys from the bad?

But here the media and the public have been deceived. The Marxism of the EPLF and the TPLF is largely irrelevant to American interests, for both rebel groups are fiercely anti-Soviet. Both groups, moreover, operate model famine relief operations, which have transported American-donated grain to populations under their control far more effectively than has the Ethiopian government. In the current cross-border feeding program, for example, the United States, the International Committee of the Red Cross, various other charities, and the EPLF and the TPLF are cooperating to truck upwards of 200 tons of food daily into Eritrea and Tigre. (Relations between the U.S. and the Tigreans have been severely strained, however, by the March killing of two famine relief workers by the TPLF.) While peasants flee from areas controlled by the *Dergue*, 80,000 Tigreans are migrating back to their homes in rebel-held Tigre from refugee camps in Sudan—an unambiguous indication of the rebels' popular support. For the United States, the EPLF and the TPLF are the best weapons against the regime of Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam, a Soviet puppet whose cruelty has been compared with that of Pol Pot.



But it is Mengistu's imperial ambitions, which are identical to deposed Emperor Haile Selassie's, that lie at the heart of the tragedy in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia has been independent for thousands of years, tracing its roots back to the Roman-era Semitic kingdom of Axum, centered in present-day Tigre. In the late nineteenth century, Emperor Menelik II restored Ethiopia to its former Axumite greatness, bringing Tigre in the north under the rule of his own Amharas, who inhabited the center of the country in the region of Addis Ababa, the capital which Menelik himself founded. An Ottoman

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form of exploitation ensued. The peasants of Tigre were heavily taxed and the men conscripted into the Emperor's army. Meanwhile the people of Eritrea, even farther to the north, were suffering likewise under the Italians. The decades of Italian domination over Eritrea, from 1889 to 1941, encouraged a feeling of political separateness, whereby the Eritreans saw rule from Addis Ababa as little more desirable than rule from Rome.

After World War II and the Italian defeat, Menelik's successor, Haile Selassie, continued the policy of imperial exploitation of Tigre, while adhering to a tenuous autonomy agreement with Eritrea. The autonomy agreement broke down in late 1961: civil war between the central government in Addis Ababa and guerrillas in Eritrea has continued ever since. The fighting in Tigre erupted in 1975, when Tigrean rebels took advantage of the general anarchy prevailing after the fall of Haile Selassie to launch a war. Ethiopia is plagued by other rebellions as well: in the Wollo, Gondar, Oromia, and Ogaden regions, although these are being fought on a much smaller scale than those in Eritrea and Tigre.

While the West is preoccupied with the famine, Mengistu is preoccupied with the rebellions. The Soviets share his priorities, and the stakes are high. Eritrea's Red Sea coastline gives Ethiopia great strategic value. Had it not been for shelling from Soviet warships offshore in 1977, the Eritrean port of Massawa would have fallen into EPLF hands, and Ethiopia today would be almost a landlocked nation. The Soviets have been amply rewarded. They have use of the Asmara air base, and have a naval anchorage off the Dahlak Archipelago, along Eritrea's coast. Ethiopians are not allowed to enter the bases.

Mengistu has put as many as 200,000 soldiers—two-thirds of Black Africa's largest standing army—into the battle against the EPLF. Helping out are 8,000 East bloc advisers. The Eritreans, by contrast, have up to 50,000 troops, as well as tanks and armored personnel carriers captured from the *Dergue*.

For several years running, the battle lines remained stable. But last summer, after American interest in Ethiopia had slackened, the map of the country started changing. In early July, the EPLF captured the strategic hilltop town of Barentu, in southwest Eritrea. Diplomatic and other sources reported that the *Dergue* suffered 2,000 casualties in thirteen failed attempts to retake Barentu throughout July and August. Finally, in the face of a massive *Dergue* troop build-up—which required the redeployment of two divisions from the Ogaden Desert—the EPLF withdrew from Barentu, having captured large amounts of Soviet weaponry stored there by the *Dergue*. As it turned out, the staged withdrawal was the rebels' last hurrah.

A few days after re-occupying Barentu in late August, the *Dergue* took Tessenei, lying on Eritrea's western plain between Barentu and the Sudanese border. Upon taking Tessenei, the *Dergue* destroyed a 12,000-acre network of irrigated Eritrean farms in the midst of a region hard-hit by drought.

Having chopped off the EPLF's western territorial flank, *Dergue* forces attacked the eastern coastal plain of Eritrea by the Red Sea, which they "rolled up like a hot knife through butter," according to a Western diplomat in Khartoum. This left the Eritrean rebels in control of only an oval-shaped tract extending southwards from the Sudanese border and covering Eritrea's central mountain region. Mengistu spent the autumn of 1985 trying to take the EPLF-held town of Nakfa in the southern tip of this oval. Napalm, cluster bombs, T-54 and T-55 Russian tanks, and MIG-23's were used. But after thousands of *Dergue* dead and wounded, Nakfa

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remained in the guerrillas' hands.

Authoritative figures are impossible to obtain, but it is estimated that the fighting in Eritrea in the summer and fall of 1985 resulted in over 10,000 dead and wounded on both sides. (The fighting in Tigre was on a somewhat smaller scale and achieved less dramatic gains for the *Dergue*.) Many of the casualties were ethnic Oromos, people taken from the southern lowlands and forced to fight in the north. Many of Mengistu's troops were teenagers, given only a few weeks of training before being thrown into the offensive.

At the moment, the war in Ethiopia is quiet. Diplomats and guerrilla sources in Khartoum say the *Dergue* is preoccupied with another mass recruitment of young Oromos, in preparation for another assault on Nakfa. The 33,000 Oromos who recently fled across the border into Somalia were reportedly escaping "villagization," a scheme in which whole villages are being relocated. (It is entirely possible, however, that many of the Oromos were escaping military recruitment as well.) Soviet advisers have recently been seen scouting EPLF defenses at Nakfa—another indication that a new offensive is imminent.

The American press devoted only a handful of stories to the last cycle of Ethiopian carnage, even though it was larger in scope than what has taken place in Angola or Central America. The war's effect on millions of drought victims, moreover, remains untold—the same drought victims who gave the press one of its great human interest stories of late 1984 and early 1985. In fact, Ethiopia was never more than a human interest story: starvation was graphically depicted, and the resulting American relief effort provided the press with most of its material—an American story, about America's involvement in an African famine. But the real story—the famine as a manipulated consequence of war—was largely passed over. Had Mengistu been a right-wing American ally instead of a Soviet puppet, perhaps his atrocities would have garnered as much attention as Bruce Springsteen singing "We Are the World." For now, the outlines of the story remain to be filled in, as the strategic dénouement of the tragedy begins. □

THE PUBLIC POLICY

MANHATTAN SWISH

by P. J. O'Rourke

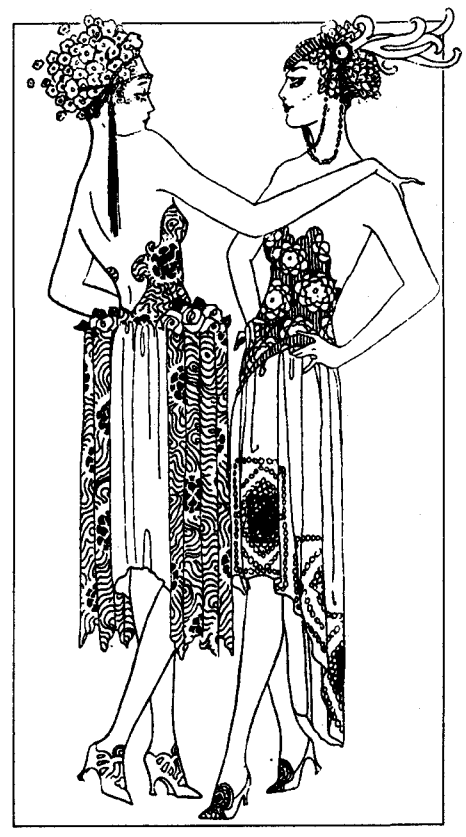
After fifteen years of argle-bargle, New York City has passed a "Homosexual Rights" law. Actually, to be accurate, New York City has passed a "Sexual Lifestyles" law which forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, public accommodations, and hiring. It's easy to have a cheap laugh at the expense of such legislation. And, what the heck, let's do it. When I go to New York, I can now have any sexual lifestyle I want. I can have the sexual lifestyle of a writer, for instance—with a wife, a mistress, and a bevy of co-eds from my Contemporary Fiction seminar. (Like a lot of writers, I've been wondering when this was going to happen.) Or I can have the sexual lifestyle of an Atlantic salmon—swim up the East River, beget kids without meeting or even seeing my date, then die. Or my true love and I can have the sexual lifestyle of dogs and get stuck together on a grade-school playground during recess. Let freedom ring.

But we should not trounce too vigorously on this latest nonsense from the World Capital of Bad Ideas. To argue with excessive rancor against this odd, dumb city ordinance would put us in bed, so to speak, with some frightful loons. Mad Baptists, wild-eyed fundamentalist Moslems and Jews, repressed hard hats, schizophrenic LaRouche-oids are already double-aghast on the subject. Plus the Catholic Church opposes the bill. Now, the Catholic Church is a fine and upstanding organization. And it is, as its charter insists that it be, usually on the side of the angels. However, it has been my personal experience that whatever the Catholic Church says about sex—it's wrong. This was true at the drive-in movie with Kitty O'Brian in 1964. And I'll bet it's true now. God's vicar on earth the Pope may be, God's Dr. Ruth he ain't. Besides, if "discrimination based on sexual orientation" had been strictly enforced within the Church, we'd be out of a whole lot of bishops and probably St. Paul.

To be fair, New York City's Sexual Lifestyles law does not mandate how-to instruction on homosexuality in public or private schools. It does not prevent religious, political, or other groups from loudly condemning homosexuality as sinful, ugly, or disease-prone. It will not reopen the city's homosexual baths, recently padlocked as public health nuisances. And the bill specifically states that it does *not* "require or permit the establishment of affirmative action goals or timetables for the employment of homosexuals, bisexuals or heterosexuals, or to permit or allow sanctions for their enforcement." Day-care supervisors are not going to show up in the playroom in beards and tutus. Restaurants are not going to be required to have three different bathrooms. If you have an appendectomy, you will not be forced by law to receive blood from known male prostitutes. Nothing in New York is going to change. There are no New York State or City laws against sodomy by consenting adults anyway. There are really no New York laws against anything two (or a hundred) willing grown-ups do in private with each other's naughty parts. As a matter of fact, the Sexual Lifestyles bill is nearly meaningless. And this is exactly my objection to it.

"Useless laws weaken the necessary laws," said Montesquieu. And legislation like New York's Sexual Lifestyles bill trivializes the civil and criminal codes. Indeed, a law *against* homosexuality would do the same. A law that cannot be enforced and will not be obeyed is no law at all; rather it is a prescription for lawlessness. Prohibition proved this, as do our present laws against marijuana and driving at 60. But there is a difference in any society between behavior that is permitted and behavior to which there is an inalienable right. The inalienable rights upon which our society is founded are, as logicians say, rights of *essence* rather than rights of *accident*. Whether a man is black or white, rich or poor, or even not a man at all but a girl, he is equal to any fellow citizen before the law. Blackness, poorness, girlness are essential qualities. We are protected from discrimination on these bases by the Fourteenth Amendment which says so in no uncertain terms. (This, by the way, is why the Equal Rights Amendment is such a redundant bag of junk.) Religious and political beliefs are also essential qualities, protected by the First Amendment. What a person does in bed is not an essential quality. It's a private and voluntary activity not worthy of society's legal attention.

Paradoxically, the idea that what a person does in bed is not an essential quality is what's behind the support for the Sexual Lifestyles bill. A person really *shouldn't* be fired or evicted or tossed



P. J. O'Rourke's The Bachelor's Home Companion: A Practical Guide to Keeping House Like a Pig *will be published by Simon and Schuster this fall.*

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out of a bar because of what he likes to kiss. But that doesn't give him an inalienable right to kiss it. This is a matter for mores, not legislation. A man who does an abnormal, distasteful, and, as it were, queer thing like make love to another man deserves all the ordinary protection of the law. But does he deserve *extra*ordinary protection? Not even the ancient Greeks, who were much more prone to this sort of thing than we are, thought so. To set sodomy up as a "right" opens the door to all kinds of other silly "rights" such as the right to be hired as a salesman for Brooks Brothers when you insist on wearing brown shoes with a blue suit.

Another problem with laws like this is that liberty is quantifiable. When you grant one group of citizens a right to do something, you curtail the right of another group to keep them from doing it. The right to live, for instance, curtails the right to murder. That's fine. But the rights of inverts are debatable. A school board may feel it has good reason not to want a lesbian girl's gym teacher. A hospital may not want a promiscuous gay surgeon swinging a scalpel in its patients. And what about the Army—will its recruitment practices be altered just for New York City? Some people believe (and the First Amendment allows them to do so) that homosexuality is a horrid transgression of God's plan. Do these people have to hire and work with a man whose activities they detest? They would not have to hire someone who doesn't bathe. They would not have to hire someone who smokes. Their prejudice is, no doubt, as foolish as other prejudices, but there is a difference. A black man is not free to be white, but a sodomist is free not to sodomize.

One more objection to the Sexual Lifestyles law is that it further muddies society's legal waters. Already our nation is so litigious that not a sparrow falls nor rosebud blooms but somebody goes to court about it. A homosexual rights bill gives one group which truly deserves the prejudice against it—lawyers—another tool by which to obfuscate the will of the people every time somebody doesn't get the home, job, or veal cutlet he thinks he deserves.

In sum, I don't object to the intent of New York's Sexual Lifestyles bill. I don't even object much to its effects. But I object to its existence on grounds of reason, and I object strenuously on grounds of more reason to the time and money spent arguing over the thing.

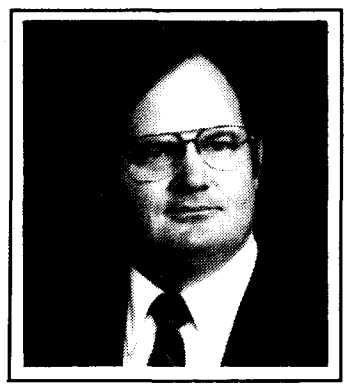
Anyway, if New York is going to protect the civil rights of minority lifestyles, why not start with the most important minority, alcoholics? Many of the great men of history have been alcoholics—F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dylan Thomas, Jackson Pollack, Ulysses S. Grant, to name a few. Alcoholism has an important place in many societies, such as Russia and American Indian tribes. Besides, as any of us will tell you, we can't help it. We're made this way. Sure, a lot of people would object. "This would invalidate drunk driving laws," they'd say. But there are probably other laws about weaving all over the road and driving across lawns. "We don't want our kids associating with alcoholics." But I swear I've never bought a kid a drink. Because kids just don't have the cash when it's their round.

Come to think of it, there's a lot of discrimination against alcoholics. We lose our jobs and our homes, too, you know. Not to mention our life savings and health. And in some places they still put us in jail just for being who we are. It's injustice. That's what it is—damn injustice. Why, some of the things that go on . . . I'm a victim of prejudice. That's what I am. Spare me a buck for a little shot and a chaser? I tell you, Bud, somebody's gotta put a stop to this. You bet they do. There oughta be a law. And then the next time they try to throw me outta this joint, *I'll* be the one that calls the cops! □

I WANTED TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK TO MY COUNTRY.

My name is Bill Kennedy. Not too many years ago I started a business with $900 and a credit card in my pocket. Today that business, Western Monetary Consultants, is one of the nation's largest dealers in gold and silver coins. The freedoms we enjoy made that possible.

But there are too many people out there who would like to take those freedoms away — in the name of "justice" and "peace." I refuse to let them. Oh, I suppose my wife Debbie and I could live out our lives quietly with our savings, drop out, let the rest of the world go by. But if we did, what kind of a country would we leave to Robbie and April and Nicholas? When our wonderful children are old enough to understand, I never want them to think: "Why did our father and mother and their friends leave us in this mess?"



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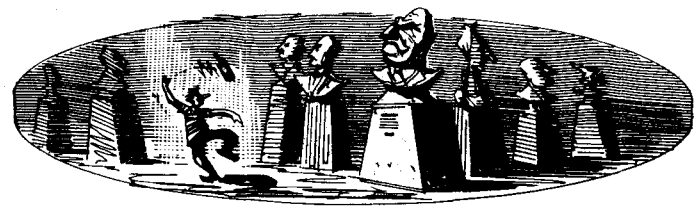

CARL SAGAN IN SPACE

by Robert Royal

While many able science popularizers come and go, Carl Sagan shows remarkable staying power. The latest fruit of his varied career is *Contact*,[1] a science fiction novel for which he received a multi-million dollar advance. In the ailing publishing industry, advances like that are only paid for a sure thing. Indeed, *Contact* became one of the ten best-selling novels in 1985, and at this writing is still at the top of the charts. Sagan's success as a popularizer is unquestioned; but his real accomplishment has been to drape the prestige of science over less savory purposes.

In the grand tradition of Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, the prototypes of twentieth-century scientific moralists, Sagan is breaking new ground as an *idiot-savant*. Russell and Einstein were utter innocents in their understanding of history, but they were at least familiar with parts of our ethical and philosophical heritage. Sagan, on the other hand, is so enslaved by *l'ésprit de géométrie* that he deliberately strives to eliminate from his work almost all non-scientific modes of thought—the very tools needed to understand history and apply its lessons to the present. *Contact* is a case in point. No one will ever mistake Carl Sagan for a novelist. But his book is worth examining for the wares he is peddling to a wide audience beneath the story's scientific facade.

The story begins when signals are received from Extraterrestrial Intelligences (these conjectural beings already have their own acronym—ETIs) and set off confused reactions around the world. One controversy Sagan takes particular pains to emphasize is the age-old debate between science and religion, revivified by the knowledge that earthlings are not alone. Science is represented by astrophysicist and protagonist Elizabeth Arroway, and religion by fundamentalist preachers.

Sound like a fair fight? Arroway has little trouble tying the hapless preachers in knots, but in the process reveals a fundamentalist streak of another kind in herself and the author. In the most revealing scene, Arroway argues how easy, even "trivial," it would have been for any god to make himself known unmistakably. All he had to do was embed some scientific statement in a religious tradition and order that it be handed down unchanged until someone came along who could understand it: "How about 'Two strands entwined is the secret of life'?"

Thus are we blithely invited to wave goodbye to the Old and New Testaments, to Socrates, the Buddha, Confucius. But more than religion is lost. Philosophy, ethics, and history cannot enter into this sort of scientism either. They too must go by the board, and with them the most characteristically human activities. The DNA double-helix is *the secret of life*.

Sagan is so far removed from historical and philosophical ways of thinking that he scarcely realizes that this is itself a philosophical position. Even more ironic is that every chapter in the novel is festooned with weighty epigraphs drawn from a wide variety of times and cultures. But Great Books maxims cannot hide the flatness of the world portrayed in *Contact*. The only current counterpart to this fundamentalist reading of the physical world is the fundamentalist reading of the Bible by the likes of Jimmy Swaggart.

This bloodless simplicity shows up in many ways. Whole areas of human life find no place in Sagan's fiction. His characters are two-dimensional, although not from his lack of skill as a writer; Sagan has shown a certain force of style in all his books. Rather, the dogmatic limitations of his worldview preclude human depths: no strong personal affections, no profound connections with nature or with history. As she travels the globe, Dr. Arroway is so abstracted by her concentration on contacting the ETIs that Puerto Rico, New Mexico, even Paris all breathe the same atmosphere for her, and she knows it. The most pathetic of her stunted human reactions come in the love scenes, which are so inept that I can only conclude Sagan meant them to say something other than they do.

Science fiction, of course, is not really about the future, but the present. H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, for example, projected a then-current Darwinian view forward in time. The Time Traveller journeys into the future and finds that Victorian society has given rise to two human species. The upper classes, relieved more and more by the

[1]Simon and Schuster, $18.95.

Robert Royal is a research associate at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

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industrial revolution from the challenges of the physical world, have become soft and decadent children, the Eloi. Simultaneously, the lower classes have been hardened into cannibalistic dwellers in the Earth, the Morlocks. The idea now seems silly, but it reveals how turn-of-the-century mechanistic biology, extrapolating from the social situation, saw the future of mankind.

How does Sagan see the future? Dr. Arroway journeys to somewhere in space where she meets the Guardians who, though they are advanced beings on another world, are clearly meant to suggest a possible human future. As well as we can tell from the sketchy details, the Guardians are disembodied, near-eternal beings who have entirely transcended historical existence. Translated back into current terms, they are cosmic ecologists, imbued with a surrealistic sense of mystery. Not only are there no wars among them, there aren't even any disagreements. They mildly go about their business conserving enough matter for the universe to continue and speculating about its maker or makers.

This is quite a vision. Many religions teach that we may enjoy the beatific vision in the next life. Karl Marx transposed some of that beatitude to this world, but even he only thought the state would wither away; in Sagan's future, history itself will have a scientific end, with the species content to putter around the cosmic garden examining specimens (very sophisticated specimens, to be sure) and ruminating in an agnostic mode.

But there are problems with Sagan's paradise. Like Wells, Sagan has an outline of history. For the most part it is based on the vulgar simplification that science is all knowledge and philosophy and religion are all error. Wells too accepted this basic view, but with much greater sophistication. The most curious feature of Sagan's outline of history is how pre-modern it is. His view of science still breathes the confidence and hope of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The modern crisis of values, the anomie, angst, absurdity—the cultural chaos and all the characteristically modern maladies—form no part of Sagan's consciousness. Where Wells saw potential dangers lurking in the very heart of human progress, Sagan sees nothing but light.

Wells's vision, for all its flaws, seems more realistic: Sagan could do with a dose of hard-nosed Darwinism. "There's plenty of order in my universe," Dr. Arroway tells a fundamentalist. "Gravitation, electromagnetism, quantum mechanics, superunification, they all involve laws. And as for behavior, why can't we *figure out* what's in our best interest as a species?" Order, yes; but meaning and method for guiding human action, not at all. This is not merely an instance of the quarrel between C. P. Snow's two cultures. Sagan is blind to the potential consequences of the current crisis of values, even though science's failed attempt to answer the questions of history is one of the principal causes of that crisis. A scientific approach like Sagan's counsels us to lay aside all human differences not strictly based on a narrow, materialistic epistemology. But in the world that most of us inhabit, the quintessentially human questions—the questions not readily answerable by material means—are crucial. People will die for a conception of the world. To Carl Sagan, the tangled actualities of human life are not merely deplorable; they are to be abolished.

This illuminates several of Sagan's public positions. Why does he oppose SDI? As a strong apostle of the benefits of science, he should be inclined toward a technological solution to a technological stalemate. As a scientist, he must know that developments in technology can and will make such a defense possible. Why then the opposition?

If we look for the answer simply in his liberal politics, we will mistake an effect for the cause. As is clear in all of Sagan's work, he opposes nuclear weapons and technical attempts to defend against them because he wishes to abolish the categories of politics and history *tout court*. He says in *Cosmos*, "Astronomically, the United States and the Soviet Union are the same place." That's a neat formula. Since our quarrel with the Soviet Union would have no importance to an ETI, it should have no importance to us either. When Elizabeth Arroway and her Soviet counterpart meet at various conferences, each entertains the other by denouncing the foreign policies of *his own* country. Occasionally, the Soviet scientist suffers from some dark political forces at home, but Arroway delicately refrains from inquiring about them; they seem to be merely comparable to the incomprehension American scientists customarily find in Washington. Any right-thinking person, presumably, would want to transcend the limitations of both dark superpowers.

This may be evenhandedness from a scientific point of view, but in human terms something else is going on. Sagan made it clear in *Cosmos* that some good might be found in religious or even mythological traditions, provided they were not of the West. At one point, he is plain in his contempt for Western culture; Westerners looked down on primitive cultures, he says, because we had not yet applied Einstein's concept of "no privileged frames of reference" to social and political matters. He seems to think that the Western view of man was based on the belief that man is the center of the universe. This is a common misconception about Aristotelian and medieval thought, often refuted but alive nonetheless. In the old view, Earth was not the center of the universe, but at the bottom of a hierarchy with an absolute up and down. Man was the lowest of the intellects. The astronomy was mistaken, but the idea gave the human being a humble dignity.

Today our astronomy is better, but our view of the human being is not. Sagan tells us repeatedly how insignificant we are in the universe. We inhabit a speck of dust in an immense cosmos. Earth, says one character in *Contact*, is a ghetto. Notice that all of a sudden, whatever the relation of primitive cultures to the West back on Earth, "privileged frames of reference" seem to be operating again. Compared with ourselves, the abode of advanced beings working at monumental projects is where the real action is. We're simply a bunch of underprivileged ghetto kids who won't believe what we see when we get uptown.

In a way, Sagan's is a permutation of the old view. But the old view had the advantage of hierarchy: the higher beings were higher than we are *by nature*. Sagan's ETIs are just smarter: their lives may also be better, and Sagan clearly thinks so. Apparently he believes we will be better off as pure intellects, bereft of consequential choices. But from the little the reader can gather about them in the novel, the Guardians for all their powers lead meaningless lives, perhaps even worse than our own by several measures.

For there is no getting around the old problem of intrinsic value. If human beings are by nature insignificant, why should other creatures, however advanced and pleasant, be any more significant? Because they control whole galaxies while we only build canals and

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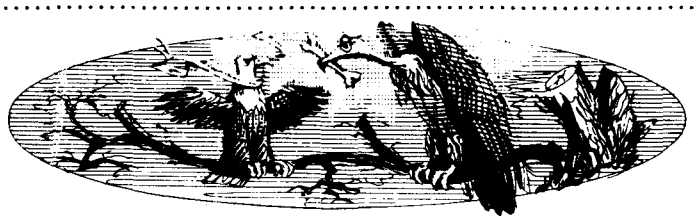
dams? Sagan senses the problem; thus to give them a little heft, he hints that the extraterrestrials are involved in a kind of search for the creator. The heavens declare the glory of God, says the Psalmist; but Carl Sagan will only believe him if an ETI tells him so.

It is a central part of our tradition that mere knowledge must be guided by understanding, and both by wisdom. All three become clouded by the simple accumulation of facts. While Sagan and Elizabeth Arroway are figuring out what's good for us, lots of other folks—those who have spouses to choose, children to raise, far-reaching decisions to make—have already been at work on the question. There is no time to wait for Sagan's inconclusive data. For the greater part of these data should be the human situation itself. But any appeal to the specifically human in *Contact* is confronted with "courageous thinking," that is, thinly rationalistic solutions to all questions of morality and values.

Sagan's role in the modern *trahison des clercs* is similar to the phenomenon described by Julien Benda. Benda objected to intellectuals who engaged in politics instead of following the truth unswervingly. According to Benda, the treason of the intellectuals was not that they were disinterested ivory-tower theorists, but that they were not disinterested enough. They wanted to give up their true calling for public influence. Sagan's visibility came initially from his considerable abilities as a popularizer of science. But for those who have lost faith, who cannot accept the consolations of philosophy, or who will not learn the lessons of history, the promise of delivery through a transcendent science seems to be the only hope left. The sad result is the transformation of Carl Sagan, popularizer, into Carl Sagan, moralist. □

THE *NATION*'S PULSE



PARTY TIME

by David Evanier

Alger Hiss was there. William Sloane Coffin, former *Daily Worker* staffer A. B. Magil, former *Guardian* editor James Aronson, Marvin Gettleman, Martin Duberman, actor Edward Herrman (who played stuffy Alger in the TV special), Penn Kimball—all celebrating the 120th anniversary of the *Nation* at the seventh regiment armory in Manhattan on March 18. A chic crowd, wandering back and forth between the two bandstands (one for music, the other for heavy stuff: Jesse Jackson, Bella Abzug, George McGovern), munching cotton candy, popcorn, chili, plenty of booze. An affluent crowd, some in punk hairdos, cowboy boots, earrings (for men), granny glasses.

My earliest memories of the *Nation* are bound up with my own coming of age. When I was 13, I spent a summer at a military academy in upstate New York. A Catholic instructor, spotting the mag among my books, lashed out with amazing fury that it was a rag; that if I read it I didn't understand it, and he doubted I read it anyway. Happened to be right (which enraged me at the moment more than anything); the *Nation* at that age was a badge of defiance. After his outburst, I dipped into it and found to my embarrassment that I was in over my head.

At 18, bounced out of St. John's College in Annapolis for spending the semester reading Thomas Wolfe in the library, I was walking along 42nd Street by the Manhattan library, by the magazine kiosks where I eagerly followed the literary world. I went into a phone booth and called the *Nation* editor, Carey McWilliams, holding my breath. He said, "Yes, we've accepted your piece." I leapt into the air. My first publication.

Later, in fact, I actually did read the *Nation* along with the *New Statesman*, and while I don't recall the *Nation* ever having the unalloyed brilliance of such *New Statesman* writers as Conor Cruise O'Brien, Paul Johnson, Kingsley Martin, or Malcolm Muggeridge, nevertheless I still think it's true that under Carey McWilliams the *Nation* had a certain quality; that its politics did not reach into the back of the book and determine so many of its book reviews and literary projects. Men of honor such as Emile Capouya and M. L. Rosenthal were literary and poetry editors. In other words, I cannot connect the *Nation* of old, with all its political faults, with the Stalinized journal it is today. Michael Novak recently wrote: "Once a liberal journal, the *Nation* in recent years has become to journalism what Lyndon LaRouche has become to politics: extremist, hateful, slanderous and reckless of the dignity of others." There was a time when, however you disagreed, a disinterested and passionate commitment to art and culture could exist alongside loony hopes that the Soviet Union's next five-year plan would not involve torturing millions of innocent people.

But here we are in 1986, and in the grand old dank and lonely armory some 3,000 people are wandering back and forth in the noise, between Joan Baez or a noisy band on one stage, and on the other? The left's current idols. The disco radicals and limousine liberals wander in the direction of the noise. And what do they hear?

Studs Terkel: "Truth spoken to power . . ." George McGovern: "the veteran angels of our nation." A lady from the South, Mollie Ivins of the *Dallas Times-Herald*. This kind is a favorite among front groups. Nasal Southern twang, dry wit, salt-of-the-earth type. Here's Mollie: "Y'all know they been tellin' us for a long time that the Red Tide would come lappin' at our borders. . . . We expect them to come up Commerce Avenue in downtown Dallas any day. We've all been synchronizin' our Rolexes. We ain't gonna fire till we see the whites of their eyes. . . . If we have to fall back and regroup we'll meet at the Dairy Queen in the Delray shopping center . . ." That sort of thing. Rabbi Balfour Brickner gets up to introduce Jesse Jackson. Brickner is understanding. He said of Louis Farrakhan in 1985: "Basically, Rev. Louis Farrakhan is simply an anti-Semitic 'blip' on the screen of our lives put there by the media, some overreactive Jews and Mayor Koch . . ." You can see this guy's whipped himself into readiness to love Jesse Jackson. And he does: "Maybe some don't know that when Reagan was tramping around on Nazi graves, Jesse Jackson was visiting the graves of my kin—"

At this point right near me a young lady actually spoke up in a crisp British voice: "I don't think they'd appreciate having him there—"

An old lady snapped, "Shut up," to the young lady.

Brickner continued: "Ladies and gentlemen, a man with whom I now find myself more in synch than I find myself with many. A colleague, an ally, in tough causes and against formidable foes in and out of government, a dear personal friend."

Jackson stands there. Seeing Jackson up close is interesting. A frigidaire is the only image that comes to mind. (I

David Evanier's article on the World Muslim Congress also appears in this issue.

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remember a Senator cozying up to him on a TV panel show, trying to put an arm around Jesse, and Jesse shuddering, pulling out of the grip, making shooing motions with his fingers.)

And here are Jackson's words, surely the most overrated rhetoric around: "Thank you, *Nation*, for the heritage, thank you for the integrity, thank you for the relevance, thank you for the consistency. . . . Looking back at the 120 years of struggle, and journalistic integrity, we cannot look backwards and go forwards lest we stumble. . . ." Oh well, you know he doesn't read the damn thing anyway. No one does. Even those who agree with it. ". . . . Do not faint in the face of adversity as they try to attack and undercut the liberal or the progressive movements. Though we do not have state power tonight, we are right, and our spirits ought be lifted, for we are winning. Duvalier has gone. We are winning. Marcos has gone. We are winning. And Botha is on the way out. And Reagan has just a few more days. . . . We must be the people who care for children in the dawn of life . . . poor people in the pit of life . . . for the stranger on the Jericho road . . ." No outhouse to the White House tonight. But he's saving it all up, you can be sure. In a gentle reminder of her gender, Bella Abzug concluded her remarks by reciting a song: "I am woman/watch me grow/see me standing toe to toe. . . . A long, long way to go. . . . As I spread my loving arms/across the land/but I'm still an embryo. . . ."

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The 120th anniversary issue of the *Nation* is available for anyone who wants it. Few takers. According to a *Newsday* report that day, the talk of the party will be Gore Vidal's article, "The Empire Lovers Strike Back." It isn't. It's an embarrassment, the kind of dreck writers take from the bottom of their garbage cans and give to editors who don't pay much or stand for anything. Yet another attack on Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter, if it isn't pure anti-Semitism it may be because so much personal envy, sexual ambiguity, and self-hatred hide behind it:

> All in all, Poddy is a silly billy. . . . Like most of our Israeli fifth columnists, Midge isn't much interested in what the *goyim* were up to before Ellis Island. . . . In the Middle East another predatory people is busy stealing other people's land in the name of an alien theocracy. She is a propagandist for these predators (paid for?) and that is what all this nonsense is about.

Which brings to mind the saddest thing about the occasion. Off to the side are portraits of writers who once graced the *Nation*'s pages: Theodore Dreiser, Henry James, William James, Emily Dickinson, John Dos Passos, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Upton Sinclair, James Agee, Willa Cather. Glancing through recent years of the *Nation*, here is what the rag can muster on a regular basis: Alexander Cockburn, Robert Sherrill, Christopher Hitchens, Sidney Lens, Andrew Kopkind, Fred J. Cook, Todd Gitlin, Edward W. Said (a member of the PLO's Palestine National Council), and Communist party hack Gilbert Green, who wrote about—you guessed it—the FBI's "forgery by typewriter" in the Hiss case. On the brighter side, the *Nation* recently sponsored a tour to the Soviet Union. The highlight was a trip to Lenin's tomb.

This is not to say that gifted writers do not appear in the pages of the *Nation*. Even today, poetry editor Grace Shulman has independence, and so does art critic Arthur C. Danto. Good things occasionally squeeze their way into the magazine. Editor Vic Navasky is a crafty fellow. I recently overheard a conversation in which someone mused aloud about the mystery of the *Nation* publishing pieces favorable to Polish Solidarity. A friend of mine, craftier than Navasky, answered: "Well, you know, at this very moment, someone is clipping pages from the *Nation* for

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historical reasons, or literary ones, or whatever. Even the *Nation* is aware of such things. They know that."

On the way out I spot a woman holding her fur coat and waiting for her limo.

"Did you enjoy it?" I asked her.

"I had a very nice time," she said.

"Do you like the *Nation*?"

"I love the *Nation*."

"Why?"

"You read news you can't read anywhere else. I don't read it cover to cover every week, I mean."

"Do you think Jesse Jackson is anti-Semitic?"

"I do, but I was tempted to vote for him because he was at least different, and . . . who did I vote for? I think I ended up voting for Hart who I hated. I think someone talked me into it at the last minute. Like you know, I'm from Berkeley . . . I always vote for . . . you know actually the most interesting candidate."

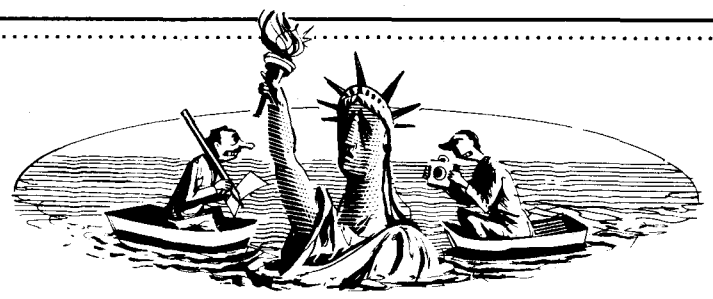
"What do you think of the Sandinistas?"

"I really support them . . . yeah . . . but I mean I'm not involved . . . why are you asking? Do you hate the *Nation*?"

"The *New Republic*'s better."

"Really? I've never seen it," she said. "I should read it. I'm probably an easy conquest. Look, I was delighted just to get dressed up, wash my hands, come out and have a nice time. I've been hearing about this party for so long, I just thought: party, you know. I mean, I could have put together a better party if they'd asked me." □

AMERICAN DOCUMENT



ARTISTIC DECLINE

by Samuel Lipman

There is a popular and attractive formulation of the desirable relationship between culture and politics. It goes by the style of the autonomy of culture and its independence from the depredations of politics. We say that culture, and high culture in particular, ought to be pure and holy. The cry is for artistic freedom, for the right of the creator to work, untrammeled by any externally imposed conditions, especially those imposed by the state and by society.

It is easy to see why this formulation is so attractive No less than anyone else, the creator of culture feels he has a right to demand this autonomy, not merely for his art and thought, but for his very life. In our century, one need only look at Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia to find *The Baton and the Jackboot*, as Berta Geissmar called her account of working with Wilhelm Furtwängler under the Nazis, and the *Taming of the Arts*, as Juri Jelagin called his 1951 chronicle of being a musician in Stalin's Russia. And we find even more: a true and horrifying story of bloody repression stretching all the way from Germany to Siberia. Candor demands too that we recognize the enormity of what happened to culture under the Cultural Revolution in Mao's China. Today, with Nazi Germany vanquished, a more vegetarian regime ruling Russia, and a proto-capitalist policy in China, we still hear from all over the world the cry of the artist crushed unto death by despotic governments.

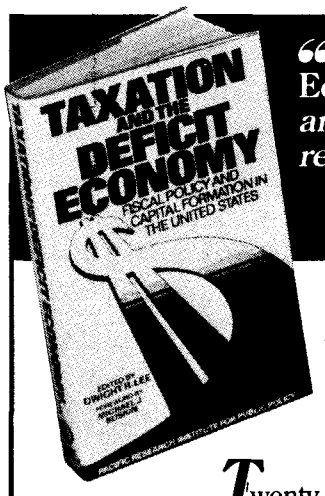
But here, in the wonderful countries of the West, we do not live under political tyrannies. Here the political process is open, benign to a historically unprecedented degree, and almost always slow to anger and retribution. Culture is—despite everything we fear—free to go its own way, often prospering in the marketplace and always immune to gross government sanction.

Only one question remains to be asked. Just whom does this situation in the democracies satisfy? From the standpoint of government, the answer is pretty clear, though rarely spoken out loud: Everywhere in free countries, those in charge of politics seem quite happy to bask in the reflected glory of the great accomplishments of the past, to take credit for an attitude of generalized benignity toward new culture as a whole, and to allow those troublesome creatures we call artists and thinkers a pat on the back and free rein to achieve their goals as best they see fit.

It is fair to say that artists are of several minds about these matters. Many, and perhaps most, artists are content to use their public freedom for private artistic purposes, and to leave wider questions of the relationship between culture and politics to those who find the subject interesting. For these artists, their art's the thing, and wider questions of state and polity—the place of their art and thought in a wider political and social context, and the influence of that context on the content of their art—are left unexamined.

But there are other artists—whether they are better or worse artists is both a difficult and an important question—who cannot rest content with the easy pluralism it is the glory of democratic societies to allow. On the part of these artists, there seem to be two reactions, rather than one; both are in some sense hostile to the *status quo*. The first reaction is that culture here too, despite all appearances to the contrary, is controlled; what totalitarian states kill by violence, our governments attempt to direct by genteel manipulation and open co-optation. Sometimes, there is indeed evidence of the beginnings of such intervention: government support of art during the Carter Administration, for example, was marked by conscious attempts to use art to further political and social goals. Since the Republican victory in 1980, there has been fear, supported by remarkably few facts (or so it seems to me), of a similar,

Samuel Lipman is publisher of the New Criterion *and music critic of* Commentary. *This article, in somewhat different form, was a contribution to a panel discussion on "Culture and Politics: The New Criterion," held at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA in New York on January 20, 1986.*



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though politically opposite, kind of behavior at the National Endowments by the Reagan Administration. Thus in the *New Republic*, the critic and director Robert Brustein is mightily concerned that White House appointees, acting for ideological reasons, are going to block federal funding for his own particular vision of avant-garde theater. And the leftist *Nation* complains that the National Endowment for the Humanities has followed a political agenda in refusing to support "humanistic" media programs on racism.

Underlying this first reaction, often to the point of massive depression, is a second: it stems from the conviction that nobody beside those directly involved cares what these artists do. When that anarchic spirit Paul Goodman felt impelled to remark that at least in the Soviet Union writers were taken seriously, his implicit accusation was that here they are *not* taken seriously. In evaluating this position, it is difficult to avoid the impression that the artist is demanding, as by right, access to a public on the largest scale, and of the most exalted constitution.

So we should not be surprised that everywhere in the West, many artists under freedom hanker after just that organic connection with politics that artists under dictatorship—and those who support them from afar—deny and resist. It has to be said that this hankering, as we see it displayed in art magazines and at writers' conferences of unblessed memory, takes curious forms. Not for our artists, widely hostile to the present organization of democratic societies, is the unbuttoned nationalism composers of the nineteenth century found so fructifying; despite their admiration for various nationalisms abroad today, they see patriotism at home as opportunism at best, treason at worst. The morass in which public art finds itself in our time is proof enough of the real separation so many artists feel from the social order, as it is of the dissatisfaction the social order feels with the artists. For many artists, and these not the least intelligent, matters have gone beyond separation from society; whatever our creators of culture cannot support they feel they must openly oppose. Paradoxically, it is thus by opposition today that artists show most deeply their desire for connection tomorrow with a future political and social order.

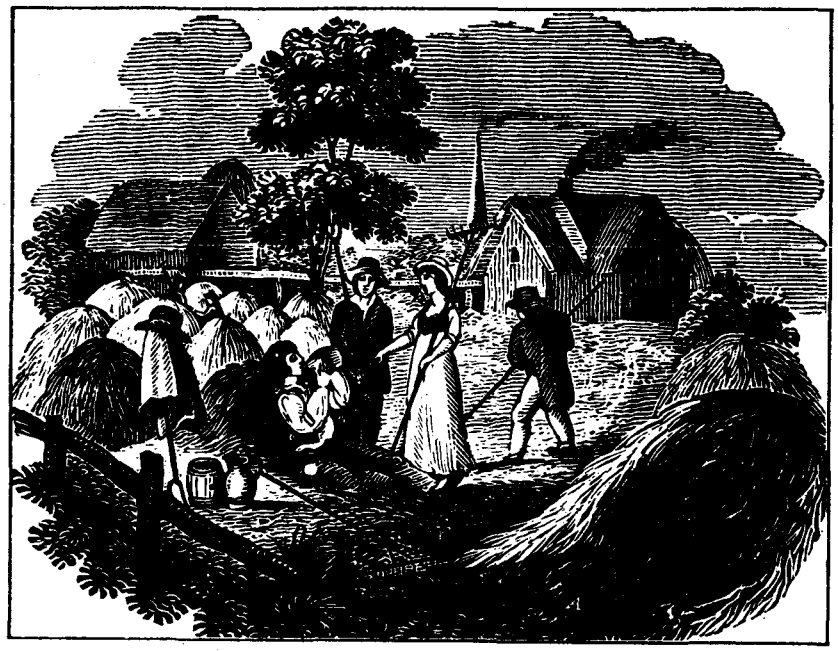
Everywhere in this difficult relationship of culture and politics there are gains and losses. In our present situation the gains are basic and clear: life and liberty. But there are losses too, those which involve the loss to society of the participation of the artist in the continuing self-definition of society, and the loss to the artist of the support and inspiration of society. There is another loss for us all in the present situation: the triviality of so much that now passes for "the cutting edge" in art. This triviality, when combined with the exhaustion of the vitality of tradition evident in so many fields, causes the most educated and sensitive among us to think in terms of the end of culture.

Perhaps it is time to ask some questions. Is this the best we can do in a democracy? Should we continue along the path of hostility and ignorance that to a large extent now separates culture and politics, and accept this situation as a necessary safeguard of the blessings of democratic life? Or should we attempt, by free discussion and by basic education, to bridge the gap between state and society on the one hand, and the artist and the thinker on the other? In a world where the very idea of the legitimacy of even the most benevolent states is under attack, the future of a civilized democratic polity may depend on our answers to these questions. □

The Good Old Days Weren't

One thing about "the good old days"—they weren't. Not for most people.

The fact is, prior to the industrial revolution, all but a very few lived in excruciating poverty, misery, and hopelessness.



As Professor Leo Rosten reminds us:

"It was the factory system that saved the poor, gave them jobs and tools, produced better food and clothing and shelter, and offered unprecedented opportunities to millions.

"Those who moved into the stinking slums of English cities from the lovely English countryside moved out of stinking barns and hovels and ditches. They went to the machines to get a precious job, to live better and aspire higher. The same is true of the millions of immigrants who flocked to American sweatshops from the hunger and hopelessness of Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe.

"Capitalism replaced not (Utopia), but indescribable poverty, illiteracy, and economic doom.

"It was under 'heartless capitalism', believe it or not, that the earnings of the masses soared. And as men became less poor, their (voices) grew louder and their... political power boomed into a force such as had not existed within any political system before."

Capitalism has not wiped out poverty, injustice, or unemployment. But neither has socialism. And in our rush to perfect the human condition, we would do well to remember the words of Winston Churchill: "The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings. The inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of misery."

Fortunately, we have come a long way from that kind of equality.

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BEN STEIN'S HOLLYWOOD—AND MINE

HER ONLY SIN
Ben Stein/St. Martin's Press/$16.95

Mark Falcoff

Ben Stein is a novelist, film-writer, and social commentator whose work is of particular significance to me because of several personal circumstances. He grew up in Washington, D.C.; I came of age in Hollywood. His father was a cabinet member; mine was not. He went to Yale Law and worked at the White House and the *Wall Street Journal*, moving to Los Angeles in 1977 to work for Norman Lear Productions. I went to Princeton and ended up teaching for ten years at a third-rate state university in the Pacific Northwest before finally chucking it and moving to the nation's capital in 1981. Thus, by a rather circuitous route, Stein and I have now exchanged places, and each of us thinks he got the better of the deal. In the one and only time we have met, he was astounded to learn how happy I was living in what for him had been the purgatory of his adolescence. For my part, I found it amazing that he took Los Angeles seriously as a social phenomenon and thought it worth so much literary energy.

Not that I don't like his books—quite the contrary, I find them endlessly fascinating. I wouldn't say that Stein is a *great* novelist, but American fiction being what it is these days, one takes one's literary pleasures where one can. Actually, Stein's style has been steadily improving (there are some really excellent passages in his latest novel, *Her Only Sin*), but it seems to me that he's really a social critic who should be writing essays. His stories are merely didactic devices to say what he could express more forthrightly—and more interestingly—without the gossamer filter of fiction. And gossamer is just about the right word, because in *Her Only Sin*, the characters are absolutely two-dimensional, like actors in a medieval mystery play identified by signs around their necks (Envy, Greed, Lust, Charity). The individual who rings most true is the narrator, a man whose curriculum and personality strongly resemble Ben Stein's. He even has the same first name.

I can attest to the resemblance on the basis, at least, of having a lunch with him at The Palm in West Hollywood a few years ago. Though The Palm is only two or so miles from my parents' house, I had never been inside, and was in fact only barely aware of its existence. But it is one of Stein's favorite places, and apparently the restaurant of choice of the film community and its many adjacent activities (sports, records, television, advertising, modeling). Over lunch Stein told me a great deal about himself, and even more about Hollywood and Los Angeles as he saw it. Though the event took place a while back, I can still vividly recall the topics:

(1) Money. How much it cost to live in the city; how much he and his wife paid for insurance on their cars ($300 per month—which led me to assume they were expensive and imported; they are). How much people spend on restaurants per month in Los Angeles—"people" in this case being film people ($5,000-$10,000). How these same people try to make even more money on tax dodges and other scams (such as he was in fact outlining at the time in his novel *'Ludes*, published shortly thereafter).

(2) Politics, and particularly the politics of the film industry people. I had just finished reading *The View from Sunset Boulevard*, his study of the ideological content of American sit-coms, as well as of the political views of the people who make them, and I ventured the thought that perhaps the latter's left-wing inclinations were a product of guilt—a sense of shame that they were making these fabulous sums doing something which was, well, both easy and trashy, while ordinary men and women had to struggle to support their families. He assured me this was very far from the case. "They actually think they are *underpaid*, and they imagine that *they* are poor working stiffs exploited by the 'bosses' just like coal miners or garment workers." He added that he was the only person in the entire film community who subscribed to magazines like *Commentary* and *The American Spectator*, which I could well believe. (Adolph Menjou, please phone home.) I asked him how these same people responded to him—after all, he'd worked for Richard Nixon. "Well, Nixon to them is just one more freak they've seen on television—it's as if I'd worked for Mr. T or Bela Lugosi."

(3) Valley Girls. For those who have not read Stein's work on this most interesting subject, these are exceedingly nubile young women between the ages of 14 and 17 who are extremely precocious about certain things—drugs, sex, cars, money, who's who in "the industry" (television, films, and so on)—but who cannot identify, say, the seat of government of the Irish Republic. For that matter, they might even think that New York is the political capital of the United States, or maybe even Sacramento. Stein was obviously both fascinated and repelled by these girls, of whom he seemed to know more than a few: they were so unlike the young ladies he grew up with or dated in Silver Spring, Maryland, "nice" girls who took piano lessons, had their teeth straightened, wore pleated skirts and sensible blouses with training bras, and had their first drink of alcohol at the senior prom. Little did I know that he was describing some of the raw material which would eventually appear in *Her Only Sin*, but at least when I read them recently I knew whence they had come. Maybe it was all taking shape even as we ate The Palm's justly famous greasy hamburger steaks and wonderful onion rings.

My first book by Ben Stein—it remains my favorite—was *Dreemz* (1978). It purports to be the diary of his first year in Los Angeles. There are, of course, many such books, since the city, try as it might, cannot cease to inspire them; what makes this one truly distinctive is that, instead of reeling in horror at the mixture of crassness, superficiality, and superlative climate, as Evelyn Waugh did, for example, in *The Loved One*, Stein positively revels in what he finds. As he writes of his first moments at the airport, "It was

Mark Falcoff is resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

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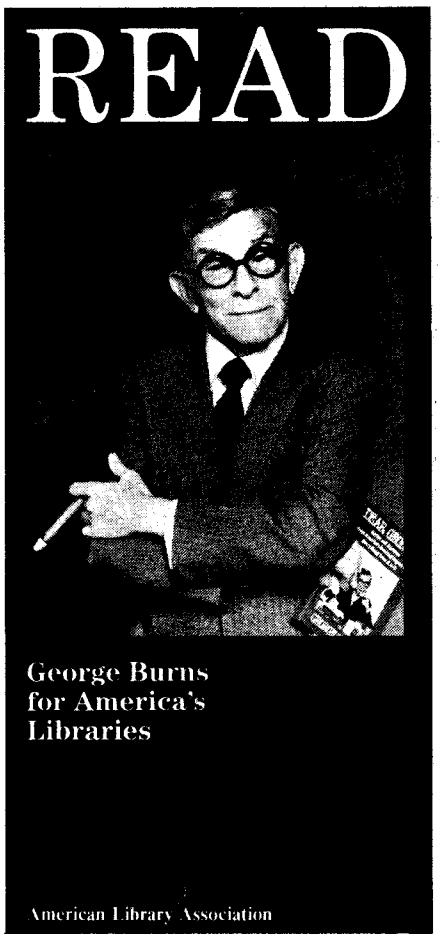
wonderful—warm, dry weather with a gentle breeze. . . . Near the door to the parking lot are a few beautiful girls in short shorts and tight T-shirts. This is what I came here for. . . . The girls ran up and hugged me while a studio photographer took pictures and other passengers looked on. This is what I have come to California for." His idea, stated simply: "to seek gold in the L.A. palm trees instead of the subways."



The title of the book is taken from the license plate he orders for his new Mercedes-Benz convertible, a car such as his parents, economists both, would never dream of owning.

Now, the reason I found this so bracing was not, as you might think, that I was tired of people putting down my home town. On the contrary: I think that all the things people criticize Los Angeles for are quite true—it just so happens that I *like* those things, and so does Ben Stein. From page one he had a soulmate following his pilgrimage with a combination of sympathy and fascination. I had the feeling that he was having a better time than I ever could, because, after all, he was new to everything, and much more industrious in his search. The quintessential Californian, after all, is not a native at all—he's a transplant from somewhere in the snowbelt, trying his level best to live the legend. Stein's account continues to be the source of undiminished pleasure even though I've reread it nearly a half-dozen times.

Hollywood for Ben Stein is a kind of free port, an open city, where long-repressed desires can finally find their expression. In his own personal geography its polar opposite is Washington, D.C., where he grew up and spent the early years of his career following the kind of trajectory which his parents had (at least implicitly) mapped out for him. As the narrator in *Her Only Sin* relates:

> At about one in the morning I awoke. . . . What the hell was wrong with me? What was I doing that was so great at the White House? . . . What was my future in Washington? A deputy undersecretaryship of Housing and Urban Development? A condo on Cathedral Parkway and a cabin in West Virginia? Forty-five more humid summers and freezing, wet winters? . . . Dull skies, boxy buildings, and anesthetized faces of the bureaucracy?

Whatever one may think of his judgments, this is a pretty fair summary of the career pattern of more than a few Washington Yuppies, or to be technically precise, Muppies. What Stein fails to see, apparently because he is too close to the subject, is that for many Americans who have moved there, Washington is fully as glamorous as Hollywood, in fact, *is* a kind of Hollywood—particularly if their last address was Decatur, Illinois, Memphis, Tennessee, or (as in my case) Eugene, Oregon, and if they happened to be interested in politics rather than movies and the people who make them.

The comparison is far from outlandish: with its huge ceremonial open spaces, its splendid Palladian, Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian architecture, and its artificially low skyline, the capital is really the largest back lot in the world. Instead of premieres or the Academy Awards, it has embassy black-tie dinners or White House receptions. There is a local branch of The Palm on 20th Street below Dupont Circle, but its functional equivalent is really the Hay-Adams Hotel. It's *here*, after all, that the big stars of the industry live; it's *here* that the big productions are staged; it's *here* that legislative aides in the state capitals scheme and cheat eventually to come, first to work for a member of Congress, and then—most glorious of consummations!—to be members in their own right.

This is true not merely for people who hold (or hope to hold) political office, but also for those who work with and for them: lobbyists, journalists, lawyers, and economists. The city's think-tanks and the staffs on the Hill are overflowing with defrocked academics who praise Allah daily for finally delivering them to the promised land, and who laugh uproariously at the uneasy queries of their former colleagues ("Do you have *tenure* at the Brookings Institution/Senate Foreign Relations Committee/Congressman Glotch's office?"). These are the apparatchiks who outlast all administrations; who do not need to wait for a sabbatical *and* a Guggenheim to see London or Milan or Cape Town or Buenos Aires; who know everybody; and who at the very least live in a kind of dignified semi-affluence that only a professor with a richly endowed chair at Harvard or Yale could even aspire to. As a friend of mine who works at a major consulting firm said, "Let's face it: this town pays people far more than they're worth."

Washington has long needed a novel to tell this story, and some of the passages of *Her Only Sin* show that Stein could write it if he were so inclined. In fact, by balancing the capital against Hollywood, Stein sometimes throws its most relevant features into sharpest relief, and starts to write what might have been one of our first "bi-coastal" novels, the author in heated debate with himself over two sharply contrasting life-styles. Here is one tantalizing example. If your car broke down in Washington, he writes,

> you pulled off to the side of a leafy street, walked down to an embassy or drug store and there waited calmly for help from the Auto Club to arrive, perhaps reading a book while you listened to WGMS [a local classical FM station].
>
> But here [in Los Angeles], on the freeway, if your car stopped in lane three, you would simply die as the other cars crashed into yours.

The problem is that since he is comparing Washington with Hollywood instead of everywhere else, his standard of judgment is inevitably skewed. In a way, to compare *anything* with Los Angeles tends to invalidate the comparison from the start. As Stein himself writes, there and only there are "the women more frightening than the men; the children more frightening than the adults; the elderly more frightening than the young; the rich more frightening than the poor." It is also a place totally out of touch with reality, or rather, a place where reality assumes unaccustomed forms for which most people simply are not prepared. The city has a kind of reverse rationality, which I grew up accepting as part of the landscape, much like the smog or the complicated underpasses of the freeways. *We* didn't practice it, of course (neither my father nor my grandfather was, as they say, "in the industry"), but living there it was hard to avoid noticing. One just shrugged one's shoulders and went on one's way. For Stein this is a bit difficult, because he hasn't been in Los Angeles long enough to see that even there everything that goes up eventually must come down. Instead, he writes breathlessly:

> For six months a redheaded waiter served me and my various dates seaweed, dumplings, and spicy beef at Mr. Chow. Then one day he sold a script to Columbia. He got forty thousand for a first draft and a set of revisions, and then he was officially a writer. A manicurist who lived down the hall from me on Horn Street went to Paramount every day to manicure the nails of an executive in the TV department. She told him a story of a nun who became a detec-

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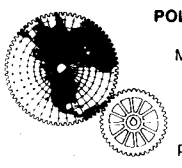

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ive. In three weeks the deal was made at NBC. The show was called "The Sister and he Tramp." It only ran for forty-six episodes, but it paid Veralynn Procter fifteen thousand per episode and then she became an executive producer on "Alladin's Laddies" and now she lives in a house in Pasadena that was built by one of the founders of Bethlehem Steel.

Or here is his attempt to decode anthropologically the rites of the film community:

I learned that Hollywood had a different lingo from the rest of the nation. For example, if a studio executive says, "I love it. It's fantastic. I can't wait to make that picture," that really means, "Get out of my office. I hate you and your filthy story." . . . If a woman whom you meet at The Palm while you wait for a table says, "I'm a producer on the lot at Universal," that means she is a secretary to a property manager. . . . If you meet a ratty-looking kid with herpes blisters on his lips who tells you that he has twenty development deals and has just made a picture that made forty million in rentals, and if he tells you this while he is snorting cocaine off a Porsche key, he is almost certainly telling the truth and will probably soon be up for an Academy Award.

When I was a kid we already knew the term "old Hollywood phony" and had no difficulty spotting them, but it takes an outsider like Ben Stein to pin them down once and for good.

It is one thing to grow up in Hollywood, another thing to be seduced by it. I always thought of movies as something made with a camera, actors, and a bunch of guys in levis and tennis shoes holding booms and reflectors, while L.A. cops redirected traffic around the site. Knowing this, I never confused the illusion with the reality, just as you couldn't be mesmerized by a magician's tricks if you knew all his secrets ahead of time. It was only when I went away to school that I discovered how the mythic dimensions of Hollywood loomed in the consciousness of people who'd never been there. Their fantasies were fed not merely by passing half the hours of their adolescence in dark theaters all over America, but by devouring the stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald or Nathanael West.

Echoes of both these authors can be found in *Her Only Sin*, as they inevitably are in almost any novel on the subject; the dust jacket even extravagantly suggests that Stein's book is an updated version of *The Last Tycoon*. It does, in fact, deal with the rise of a movie mogul, in this case a woman who goes from being a statistician and media-marketing analyst at the White House to head of a major studio. In the process it tells us much more than we ever wanted to know about an industry that, let's face it, has lost much of the genuine glitter it had during the 1930s, when—the bottom line—it actually produced a superior product. The old Hollywood characters were really characters—some of them. The people that Stein writes about are merely Johnny-come-latelies who are trying to step into the roles of people they grew up dreaming about. One of the few people in *Her Only Sin* who rings true is veteran producer Sid Bauman, product of a Jewish immigrant family in the Brownsville area of Brooklyn and a former member of the Young Communist League. But the Baumans hardly exist anymore—except in nursing homes. They've been replaced by thirty-five-year-old kids from New York (Park Avenue, in fact, instead of Brownsville) who went to the University of Wisconsin (because they just missed getting into Harvard or Yale) and jumped from protesting the Vietnam war to dealing in drugs to controlling major studios through leveraged buyouts based on a family trust fund. This is poor material for a replay of *The Last Tycoon*, and Stein cannot be blamed for not being able to rise above it. The Malibu crowd he writes about didn't invent Brie and Dom Perignon; they're just silly enough to waste their money on both. As a parking lot attendant once contemptuously observed to me of the plethora of Rolls-Royces rolling up to the restaurant where he worked: "They *rent* 'em." Of course it was true—which is exactly the point about Hollywood.

Stein's problem isn't that he doesn't see that behind the tinsel is more tinsel—it's that he is fascinated anyway. For him Hollywood and his life "in the industry" is a form of permanent rebellion against the bourgeois respectability of his upbringing, and an opportunity to have a lot of fun—which apparently he didn't have as a lawyer at the Federal Trade Commission or as a speechwriter for President Nixon. Of course, this is all of a piece with what originally attracted me to his work in *Dreemz*, but with the important difference that in that first book he maintained a critical distance from his subject. That was what made him so amusing, in fact: he was like a traditional English traveller, whose purpose in going abroad was to confirm the fact that foreigners were funny. But now in *Her Only Sin* he has become a part of what he describes, taking the whole thing much too seriously, and summoning Balzacian techniques to make sure that the reader doesn't miss a thing. But with Hollywood no longer a place but a state of mind (movies, after all, are even made nowadays in New Jersey and Pennsylvania), Stein would do well to return to Washington, and write the novel the city is still waiting for. My Hollywood, I can assure him, is better than his. □

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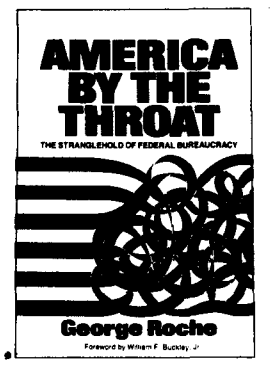

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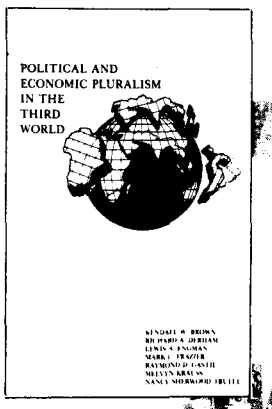

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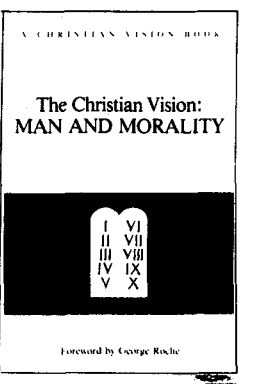

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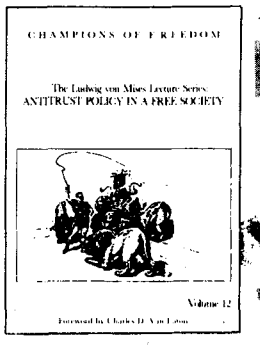

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THE SIEGE: THE SAGA OF ISRAEL AND ZIONISM

Conor Cruise O'Brien/Simon and Schuster/$24.95

William McGurn

In one of the early scenes of *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye finds himself in agreement with a young man who argues against getting too worked up about what goes on in the outside world. Immediately, another young man makes the opposite case, and Tevye, swayed, tells him he's right. Exasperated, a third young man tries to call him up short. "They can't *both* be right," he points out logically. Tevye thinks about this for a moment. "You know, you're also right," he concludes.

A bit of the same exasperation must be shared by anyone who has shelled out $24.95 to read Conor Cruise O'Brien's latest book, *The Siege*. As its subtitle suggests, the work encompasses far more than the pariah status that has been conferred on Israel by the rest of the world. Indeed, the author traces the idea of siege back to the first Zionist glimmerings of Theodor Herzl, through its confirmation in the Holocaust, and up to its enshrinement today in institutions like the United Nations. Of Irish blood, O'Brien is sympathetic to an Israel torn between the conflicting ideals of a secular and Jewish state.

Unlike many other Western commentators, moreover, O'Brien does not shy away from the mutually exclusive claims that characterize Middle Eastern politics in general and the Palestinian-Israeli dispute in particular. Yet the overall effect of his book is like that of a university course in modern ethics: that no claim is really better than any other. One would have hoped that 798 pages of investigation would have yielded a more substantive conclusion than that.

An understanding of what kind of book *The Siege* is requires first an understanding of what kind of book it is not. Here the author is most helpful. Neither a scholarly work nor a straightforward piece of history (although the general contours of Israeli history shadow its pages), it is, he says, loosely modeled on Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station*. His interest in the subject began back in 1956 when as Ireland's delegate to the U.N. he found himself seated between the Iraqi and Israeli delegates, on a committee dealing with the problem of Palestinian refugees.

Two decades later, as editor in chief of the British newspaper the *Observer*, he found himself once again enmeshed in Middle Eastern politics. Despite the *Observer*'s standard progressive line that all would be well if only everyone would sit down to talk out their differences, O'Brien's U.N. experience and his familiarity with the impasse in Ulster inoculated him against the rationalist virus: he just didn't buy it. As he relates in the introduction, he "couldn't imagine a settlement concluded between representatives of the PLO, and then ratified, by both the Knesset and the people of Israel and also by a convention of PLO membership."

This skepticism serves him well and is responsible for much of the book's virtue. He opens it with a brief synopsis of the events and arguments over Jewry leading up to the 1917 declaration by Arthur Balfour that "Her Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." Lord Balfour comes in for some mildly harsh treatment, and O'Brien notes how some of the most enthusiastic early backers of a Jewish homeland were Gentiles: those who saw in it a good way of ridding their own homelands of Jews. Probably it was of a sort with the support Marcus Garvey received for his back-to-Africa movement (which of course never achieved the fervor of Zionism). With Celtic relish O'Brien highlights the contortions forced on the British Mandate by the Balfour Declaration, which amounted to an unsuccessful attempt to please both sides of a polar divide. On the one hand the British backed a Jewish homeland, which they knew would be interpreted by Jews as a preliminary to a Jewish State; on the other, they tried to pretend to the Arabs that it was business as usual. So it's hardly surprising they ended up despised by both.

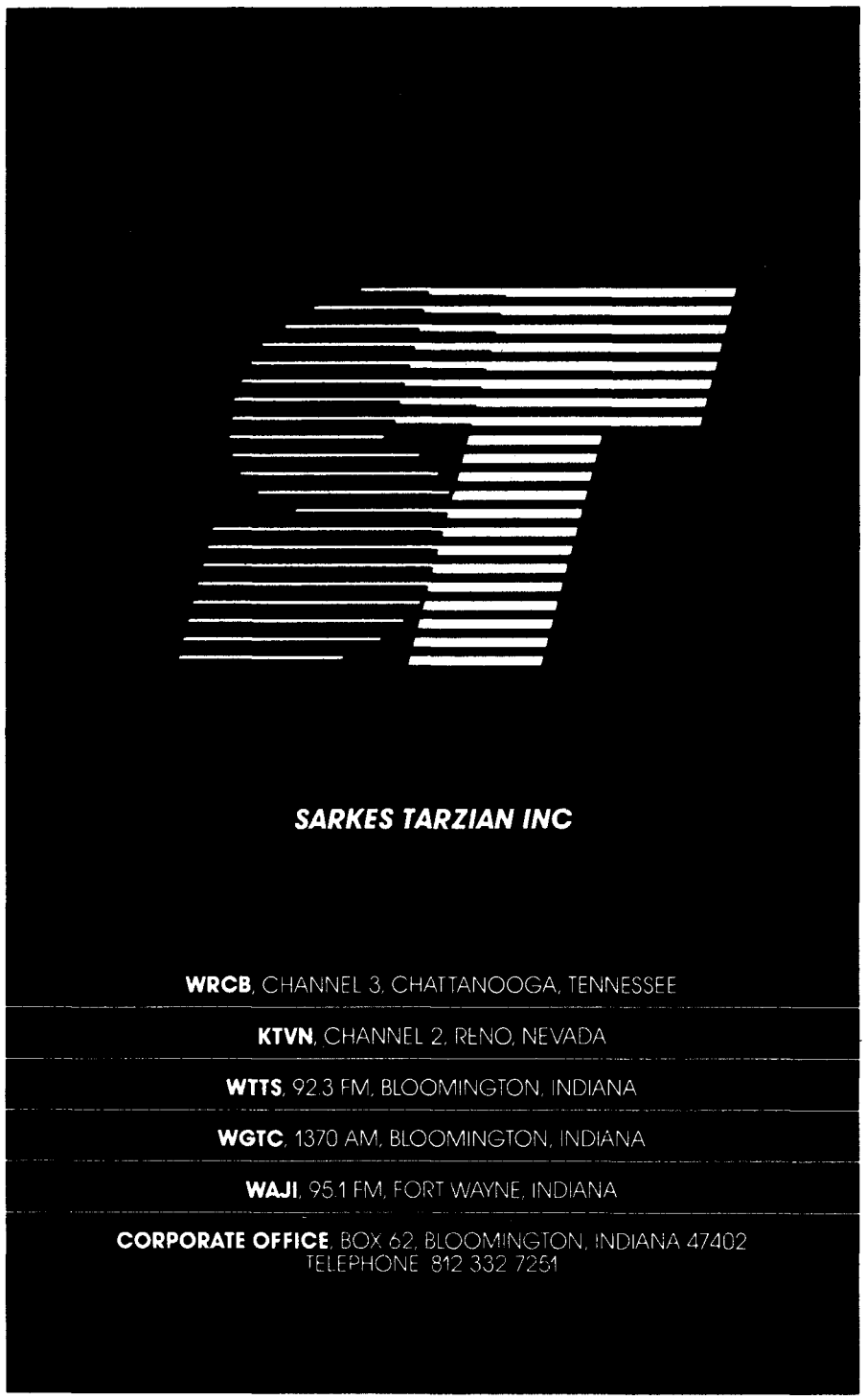
More valuable is the early distinction the author makes between Christian anti-Semitism and its more noxious Enlightenment forms. Far from eroding anti-Semitism, O'Brien says, the spread of Enlightenment ideas "simply meant that anti-Semitism was taking a new form: racism." However bad the Christians may have been to the Jews (and they were frequently bad), Christianity at least insists on limits to behavior. Rationalism, by contrast, has no check save expediency, even chiding Christianity for the imposition of supra-rational limits. From expediency and anti-Semitism it's not a large jump to Auschwitz.

Ironically, it was the Nazis' deliberate extermination of European Jewry that gave the final push to the movement for a Jewish nation. Objections put forward by assimilationists of the late nineteenth century were all negated by Hitler. As O'Brien states, "The Holocaust was the final, absolute confirmation that the Zionist 'hunch' had been right." There was only one real insurance policy against a repeat: Israel.

Anyone with even a casual interest in Israel will have his own disagreements with *The Siege*, inevitable when dealing with such an emotional subject. As suggested earlier, among mine is the distinct impression that history, with which O'Brien is more than familiar, is nonetheless relative to him, with his fondness for the status quo. Thus the book is more or less sympathetic to the Israeli line because the Israelis are on top. The more serious extension of this is that the attitude extends to Israel's internal affairs as well, where he is sympathetic to the dominant, Labor party line.

The predictable outcome is a dismissal of the right without ever treating it seriously. Vladimir Jabotinsky, for example, one of the more influential early Zionists, gets short

William McGurn is editorial features editor of the Wall Street Journal/Europe *and a European editor of* The American Spectator.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shrift. True, he is mentioned at several junctures, largely as a medieval holdover from the Russian backwoods. Yet a re-reading of Jabotinsky's writings reveals him to be more modern than most of Israel's founders (and many of its present officials, too): He was one of the few to see through the predominant socialist cant that so influenced most Zionists; worse, he argued for a strong middle class at a time when to do so was to be branded a reactionary stooge. The first to grasp the importance of having the Jews arm themselves, Jabotinsky had the misfortune to be more perceptive than most of his European colleagues and principled enough not to color his observations.

Nor does O'Brien confine his *a priori* dismissal of the Israeli right to Jabotinsky. Menachem Begin emerges as a two-dimensional zealot, lacking even the grace of Jabotinsky's refinement. Yet Begin's record, not to mention his undeniable political successes, suggests a more complex man than the one portrayed here. It was Begin who—after his ship, the *Altalena*, was attacked by Ben Gurion's forces—refused to reciprocate, broadcasting the message that his soldiers would not spill Jewish blood. Similarly, it was this hardest of the hardliners who signed the peace accord that, however shaky, still obtains with Egypt. Obstinate, difficult, not given to compromise Begin certainly was. But he deserves at least grudging credit for his steadfast commitment to tough principles during the most trying times. On the same level O'Brien's contemptuous dismissal of Sharon's plans for Lebanon is just foolish: Had the PLO not assassinated Bashir Gemayel, and had the Israelis gone on to occupy all Lebanon, that country's fragile democracy might have been preserved. If so, Israel would have found itself with an ally, instead of a liability, on its northern border.

Then there are the nits. Most annoying is the author's incessant use of *italics*. Now, I have nothing against them *per se*, but O'Brien invokes them *too* often, fearing that the thick boobies who actually *read* his book would otherwise never get the *point*. The *reason* is that his points are so frequently *tricky*. So he uses italics to emphasize that although everyone expected such-and-such an action to do *this*, it actually resulted in *just the opposite*. If you think I *exaggerate* just open to a page at random and read. *You'll* see.

For a book dealing with a siege, moreover, O'Brien curiously avoids saying what he thinks of it. He mixes an abundance of clear perceptions about the nature of the conflict with a failure to draw any necessary conclusions from them. At one point, for example, he cites Edward Said's insistence that the Arabs' only goal regarding Israel is to replace the Jewish State with the "secular and democratic" state of the Palestinian National Covenant. Appropriately skeptical of this claim, O'Brien nevertheless does not say what implications he thinks this ought to have for Western diplomats, especially Europeans, who in practice contribute to the siege of Israel.

Instead he correctly notes that "the Jews today rule in Jerusalem for the same *material* reason as the British ruled and the Ottoman Turks before them, and all others before them, back to Caliph Omar and beyond—because they conquered the place." In the epilogue he expands on this to explain why none of the current programs for peace in the Middle East is likely to succeed, even under the best of circumstances. But again his account deals only with power. No mention is made of rising Islamic fundamentalism, or what this bodes for the rest of the world, particularly with regard to terrorism.

Operating here is the traditional left-wing curse of avoiding difficult thinking by reverting to abstract constructs.

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Having realized that the world is not populated primarily by those who share his Western values of democracy, law, and compromise, he abandons all those precepts for a purely Machiavellian interpretation of events. Perhaps the modern, secular, and pluralistic state is currently impossible in the Middle East, especially for a Jewish State. But, as he does ask, is that our only legitimate model?

What it ought to boil down to is this: What is Israel today, with respect to what it would likely be otherwise and what it can be? The answer is that it is a working democracy in an area where that makes it unique. True, Christians and Moslems do not in practice enjoy equal rights with Jews in Israel, and perhaps they never will. But there is no reason they cannot, with full economic rights, prosper, even, like other minorities elsewhere (including Jews in Europe and the U.S.), prosper more than the dominant group of the nation. Certainly the sorry Israeli economy ought to put to rest any myth of a world Jewish financial conspiracy, and a Jewish State where its wealthiest (and generally content) citizens were non-Jews is fully imaginable. The whole point about Israel is not just that there is a siege mentality, but that there is a siege. This is something O'Brien's fellow Europeans, right as well as left, do not understand, or ignore, and their tacit (often more than tacit) encouragement to terrorists like the PLO will only backfire in the long run, as the massacres at the Rome and Vienna airports tragically demonstrated. In this situation it's useless to argue whether the founding of the state was "just": the U.S. doesn't come off too well *vis-à-vis* the American Indians, and the history of European nationalism is decidedly barbaric. It's too bad O'Brien didn't devote some of his otherwise remarkable work to the question it so blatantly begs. □

THE UNCERTAIN CRUSADE: JIMMY CARTER AND THE DILEMMAS OF HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

Joshua Muravchik/Hamilton Press/$18.95

Fred Barnes

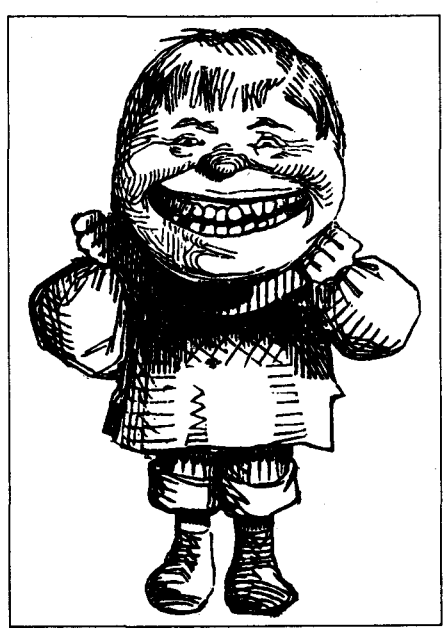
Jimmy Carter never lets you down. Just when you start to go mushy inside and think that maybe he wasn't really as awful a national leader as he often seemed, he surfaces with some zany new idea or statement. And the harsh judgment of Carter hardens. Why, just the other day I was thinking about how courageous it was of Carter to opt for oil decontrol over the fevered protests of Democratic liberals. You know, I said to myself, maybe Carter wasn't all . . . My train of thought was interrupted by news of Carter's assessment of the April 15 bombing raid on Libya. A bad move, Carter said, suggesting he knew how Colonel Qaddafi feels. If somebody killed his own daughter Amy, Carter said, he'd want revenge. Carter may not have meant to imply that Qaddafi is justified in retaliating against President Reagan, or even that he and Qaddafi have a lot in common, but that's how it sounded.

This was Carter at his self-righteous, hypocritical, and ineffective best, which is also a good way to describe the human rights policy his administration pursued with such misguided vigor. Not that there's anything wrong *per se* with the policy of making respect—or lack of respect—for human rights a major factor in American foreign affairs. Give Carter credit for fastening onto a very good idea. It is such a good idea, in fact, that when the Reagan Administration sought to abandon the policy entirely, it was roundly and justifiably criticized, and forced to retreat. Where Carter erred was in the way he pursued the policy. He piously pounded on American allies, mostly in Latin America, while letting Communist regimes off scot-free.

Okay, so conservatives have been saying this all along. Jeane Kirkpatrick wrote a famous essay on the subject. Fine. That doesn't take a thing away from *The Uncertain Crusade*. It adds impressive substance to the conservative case that Carter screwed up badly on human rights. What it offers is, in a word, proof. Muravchik, once the executive director of the hawkish Democratic group, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, offers plenty of it. In succinct (247 pages) and crisply written fashion, he lays out the weaknesses of the Carter policy.

Self-righteousness? There are lots of statements by Carter or his minions to choose from. "My government will not be deterred from . . . promoting human rights . . . in whatever ways we can," Carter told the Organization of American States in 1978. Of course, this wasn't true. Carter was easily deterred by the Soviets from pressing the human rights issue noisily against them. Carter also has bragged about his steadfastness in seeking human rights to the point of championing the plight of the Palestinians, saying he wanted to assure them the right to assemble, debate issues, and vote. At the same time, notes Muravchik, "Carter did not work to secure the right to vote or assemble or debate issues for the people of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, the Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and especially Saudi Arabia, just to mention Arab peoples."

This touches on the matter of hypocrisy, or more precisely, the double standard that marked the execution of the Carter policy. Muravchik documents the double standard—hit right-wing, autocratic allies, go easy on Communists or leftists—in irrefutable detail. In connection with the Food for Peace program, the Carter administration singled out six countries as human rights violators—Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Liberia, Somalia, and Zaire. Among the seventy-four nations not cited as violators were Syria, Nicaragua, Angola, China, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, all of which, Muravchik adds, "had Communist or leftist governments." In votes on loans or grants by international financial institutions, the same pattern prevailed. The chief targets of negative U.S. votes were Argentina, Uruguay, and the Philippines. Under pressure from Congress, the Carterites voted no on some funds for Vietnam and Laos, but yes on money for Yugoslavia and Rumania. And it went along every time on votes affecting Syria, Tanzania, Somalia, Panama, Madagascar, Algeria, and Burma, all leftist dictatorships with bad human rights records.



Muravchik juxtaposes two striking quotes from Patricia Derian, the Carter State Department's human rights honcho. In December 1977, she explained why she didn't speak out more about the holocaust in Cambodia: "I'm not sure what you can say beyond saying that it's awful, that people are dying, that there is serious trouble there." When talking about El Salvador several years later, however, she was able to say much more: "No description of hell touches the bestiality of what is happening to the people of El Salvador."

Carter found a reason, frequently a craven one, to let almost every country off the hook but some in Latin America. Muravchik explains:

> Because we were trying to make new friends in black Africa, because we needed oil from the nations of the Near East, because we wanted détente with the Russians and the rest of the Warsaw Pact and also to encourage polycentrism within it, and because in Asia we were trying to build new relationships with some Communist governments while continuing to protect non-Communist countries against possible Communist aggression, practically the only place left to which the Carter administration felt it could apply its human rights policy was Latin America.

Hypocritical or not, did the policy work? Not exactly, says Muravchik, though he praises Carter for making human rights a bigger international issue than it had been. Using Freedom House ratings of the degree to which a country honors human rights, Muravchik found that nations against which the Carter administration took punitive action worsened on average, while those which it didn't punish improved. And if you don't find this compelling, then there are the cases of Nicaragua and Iran. The Carterites nudged Somoza out in Nicaragua, and they did little to keep the Shah in power in Iran, even putting mild human rights pressure on him at exactly the wrong time. That no democratic alternative existed in either country was lost on the Carter crowd.

One final note. Muravchik points out the crucial role that the "human rights community" has played in Washington, prompting congressional legislation and influencing Carter policy. This movement sees human rights flourishing "in societies where, in the eyes of most Americans, those rights are brutally trampled by Communist dictatorships," Muravchik says. Some in this community are shameless apologists for Vietnam, the Soviets, the Sandinistas. From their perspective, the Carter policy was not nearly one-sided and punitive enough. But it was a start in the right direction. □

Fred Barnes is a senior editor of the New Republic.

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GREED AND GLORY ON WALL STREET: THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF LEHMAN

Ken Auletta/Random House/$19.95

George Sim Johnston

The publication last spring of Ken Auletta's account of the fall of Lehman Brothers, Wall Street's oldest investment bank, marked an epoch of sorts for the *New York Times Magazine*. It was the first time that copies of the Sunday supplement lingered on coffee tables all over the Eastern Seaboard for reasons other than the real estate ads. The two-part article was a staple of conversation everywhere; people who don't know the difference between a utility stock and a utility infielder, and think that a yield curve is something dreamed up by the department of highways became instant partisans in the battle between Peter Peterson and Lew Glucksman, whose quarrel led to the firm's disappearance into the maws of American Express.

Auletta, a gifted reporter, was fortunate in that these two men seemed to represent a conflict that is as old as Greek tragedy—that between the rational and impulsive sides of human nature. They also embodied a clash between two cultures which maintain an uneasy alliance on Wall Street—that of the pin-striped investment bankers, who sit in deceptively quiet offices and collect enormous fees for rearranging the balance sheets of corporations, and of the shirt-sleeved traders, who make and lose even larger sums of money shouting into telephones. Both sides at Lehman had their share of distended egos, and Auletta's reportage not only tells us much about what goes on in high finance today but also gives the sort of Balzacian pleasures that our current crop of novelists are simply not up to providing.

Investment banks, although they sit profitably at the epicenter of the American economy, are still by and large a mystery to the general public. Even liberal arts majors entering Harvard Business School have only the foggiest notion of what firms like Morgan Stanley or Salomon Brothers actually do for a living. But they learn soon enough—it only takes a dormitory bull session or two, for when the talk turns to money (as it always does on that side of the Charles River) it turns to investment banking. No other occupation offers such lavish sums. The heads of the largest industrial corporations make peanuts compared to their brethren on Wall Street. And the difference in pay scale starts right away. Last year, I am told, one investment bank paid $125,000 to MBAs, many in their mid-twenties, for their first full year. And the subsequent curve is practically vertical for the best performers. (Roy Blount, Jr., reviewing a book about Time Inc.'s cable magazine fiasco, recently wondered why the enormous salaries of corporate executives are always prime numbers; but the compensation of a top investment banker always ends with plenty of zeros.)

The trig cadets from Harvard, Stanford, and a few other business schools invariably land at the half dozen or so major investment banks. Although the business is said to be entrepreneurial, young bankers during their first year or two on the job are paid for the same reason that starting lawyers and accountants are paid lesser sums; that is, not to make mistakes. They spend most of their time crunching numbers; they extract them from annual reports and registration statements, multiply or divide by other numbers, and put the results on a spreadsheet. These pieces of paper are used by their superiors either for making decisions or for giving the client the impression that much effort has gone into making a decision.

The associate who produces the spreadsheet gets little notice—unless somebody spots a mistake. Then the consequences can be brutal. After a year or two of making numbers jump and heel and displaying good table manners with clients, the associate moves into a small office and eventually either succeeds or fails at finding his chair in the partners' dining room. Swift maturation is essential; an associate still in his twenties is expected to hold his own with the senior management of a Fortune 500 corporation. The peak years for an investment banker run from roughly thirty to forty-five or fifty. They retire early because the stress level in the business is up there with the control tower at LaGuardia airport. Superannuated bankers often take their money and settle into that wonderfully vague activity known as "consulting."

Until the late sixties, bond and stock traders were in an entirely different social category from their colleagues in Corporate Finance (as investment banking departments are known). With their wide neckties and rude suspenders, they were always invited after dinner, as it were. An Ivy Leaguer by way of the Racquet Club would no more dream of becoming a trader than he would a hod carrier. (Syndicate desks, where new issues are priced, were an exception, since they are quasi-Corporate Finance.) But several things happened to change the social balance on Wall Street. The federal government began to run up huge deficits, and the resulting flood of Treasury debt, swelled by state and local bond issues, made the trading rooms of various firms much more profitable. At the same time, with inflation gathering force, the capital markets became more volatile (the price of a bond might change as much in a day as it once did in a year), and so the potential for trading profits became even greater. Finally, with the explosion of different financing vehicles (Eurodollar convertibles, zero-coupon bonds, bullet preferreds, and on and on), a firm's agility in the markets became increasingly crucial to its banking effort. It was the traders who now provided much of the "product" that bankers peddled to their clients.

Meanwhile, a new breed of financial officer was taking over at the corporations with which investment banks did business. In the old days, when money was cheap, a corporate treasurer could get by with few talents. All he had to do was to pick up the phone and he had thirty-year money at four percent. But when interest rates soared (and the stock market collapsed), the job became more complicated and in the end devolved on business school technocrats. This crowd did not particularly care whether their investment bank conducted its business like a wine tasting; for them the "old school tie," if it meant anything, was a matter of MBA networking, not drinks at the Princeton Club. Suddenly, companies like IBM and General Motors were shopping the Street for deals, breaking in the process banking relationships as old as the Glass-Steagal act.

All of this had several consequences for the social order on Wall Street. First, traders gained enormously in prestige. They were producing more than half the profits at some firms and it was no longer possible to ignore them. Second, corporate finance departments could no longer afford to be a grazing ground for preppies. It still helped if you *looked* the part, but you had to be talented. Ivy Leaguers, in fact, began to decamp to the trading rooms. It was no longer infra dig to scream all day into a telephone; the money was too spectacular. And so the two cultures on Wall Street began to merge. Oh, there were still plenty of differences, especially in dress code (in no

George Sim Johnston is a writer living in New York.

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occupation is dress a more significant subtext; the gradations of loafers, for example, running from brogue wing tips to buckles, are endless; shirt collars have even more nuances), but in the big firms the two arms of the business were finally talking to each other.

The new dispensation came easier to some firms than others. Ken Auletta's *Greed and Glory on Wall Street* makes it clear that it probably came hardest to Lehman Brothers. Until the late sixties, the firm was guided by the last of the great Wall Street autocrats, Robert "Bobbie" Lehman. Like most autocrats, he was not terribly interested in nurturing a successor. Indeed, he seemed to enjoy sitting back and watching his partners fly at each others' throats. When Lehman died after a long illness, the partnership drifted into chaos. Investment banks are inherently volatile anyway, since crack bankers are more interested in doing deals than in managing. Finally, in 1973, with the firm hemorrhaging badly, the partnership turned to Peter Peterson, who had been a boy wonder at Bell & Howell (which loomed larger on the corporate landscape twenty years ago) and Secretary of Commerce under Nixon, to impose order. Peterson did a brilliant job of turning the firm around, and by the late seventies Lehman was once again fat and prosperous.

Most of the new prosperity, however, came from the trading operation, and this was the work of Lew Glucksman, who, with his short temper and vivid Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, exhibited all the classic personality traits of a trader. Glucksman was rightly resentful that, while his traders were producing most of the firm's profits, the investment bankers were taking home most of the money and all the prestige. At Lehman, the bankers were still very much the gentry; the firm had failed to achieve the sort of cultural consensus which had long been established at competitors like Salomon and Goldman, Sachs—both of which were leaving Lehman in the dust at the time. Peterson eventually elevated Glucksman to co-chairmanship, only to learn what a lot of political leaders learn the hard way, that the granting of concessions to disgruntled parties only leads to demands for new concessions. Glucksman wanted the whole firm for himself and succeeded in getting Peterson to walk the plank in July 1983, albeit with seven million dollars in the way of severance pay. The "golden parachute" is one item of compensation where investment banks have not caught up with corporations like Revlon, which paid its CEO $32 million to take a walk after being taken over.

Once alone at the helm, Glucksman made a series of blunders which ultimately ended the firm's run as Wall Street's oldest private bank. His biggest fault, by Auletta' account, was his inability to bury past grievances. He immediately started to settle scores, particularly with the investment bankers many of whom began to jump ship, taking their capital with them. Lehman under his brief tenure was like an Ottoman satrapy, full of intrigue and back-stabbing. To be fair to Glucksman, this was in part Bobbie Lehman's legacy; and Glucksman might have made it anyway if the markets hadn't turned sour in early 1983, putting the firm in the red. Still, the end was embarrassing. The House of Lehman was finished off by—a magazine article. *Fortune* published a devastatingly accurate account of the firm's internecine conflicts which claimed that a majority of the partners wanted out. The article created sheer panic among the partners, who were now ready to sell at virtually any price. The article happened to be among the weekend reading of an executive at rival Shearson/American Express, who immediately recognized a potential bargain acquisition. A few months later yet another

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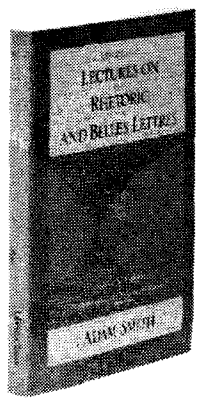

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Edited by J. C. Bryce

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Wall Street firm had merged under.

Auletta's account, as I say, reads like a good novel. And he manages this without relying on some of the more dubious tricks of the New Journalism, such as the working of people's thoughts into the narrative as if the writer had access to a cortical printout. How many current novelists could invent Glucksman's explanation of how he got to the top, shouted at a friend across a crowded party: "You know how I do it, Michael? I always keep my back to the wall of the latrine." Or the scene where Peterson, newly arrived at Lehman, is advised to meet with a senior partner, Joe Thomas, the man who put together Litton Industries, "a rugged individualist who thought the *New York Times* was a left-wing newspaper and only read the *New York Daily News* and the *Daily Racing Form.*" Peterson is told that he can find Thomas in the firm's gymnasium:

> Entering the gym that morning he saw only a man stretched out naked on a massage table, clear plastic tubes connecting his nostrils to an oxygen tank. In one hand the naked man held a lit cigar and in the other a glass of vodka. A *Daily Racing Form* rested on his ample stomach. A television set was blaring. . . . The masseur was on the phone with a bookie placing the man's bets. . . . Peterson wandered back downstairs and said, "I didn't see anyone up there except a guy with two oxygen tubes, a cigar and a martini."

Dickens and Balzac would obviously have had no complaints writing about Lehman Brothers.

What lessons do we learn from Auletta's interesting tale? Well, that organizations, like people, are far queerer on the inside than they seem on the outside. That correct intuition about other people's psychologies is far more valuable in a corporate leader than technical brilliance. And that individuals who rise to the top of their calling may well remain emotionally glued in adolescence. (Henry James after meeting Winston Churchill: "It brought home to me very forcibly—very vividly—the *limitations* by which men of genius obtain their ascendancy over mankind.")

Finally, we see that investment bankers are in the same moral predicament as other professionals in our society. Just as the exponential growth in litigation is a boon to lawyers, but not to the rest of us, so a lot of what goes on on Wall Street in the way of leveraged buy-outs and greenmail swells the pockets of the direct players but probably impoverishes society as a whole. Bankers, like lawyers, answer that they have no choice, that they are responding to forces larger than themselves. They may be right, but one still regrets the passing of the old order. □

MARRIAGE AND MORALS AMONG THE VICTORIANS

Gertrude Himmelfarb/Alfred A. Knopf/$19.95

Joseph Shattan

Some years ago, I was privileged to take part in a seminar on nineteenth-century English thought conducted by Professor Gertrude Himmelfarb. I was young and callow back then, and I'm afraid that of the actual subject matter of the seminar I can recall very little today. But what has remained with me through the years is the image of Professor Himmelfarb as a kind of intellectual conjurer, someone who would invariably prove to us that the book we had just read meant exactly the opposite of what we all thought it meant.

Something of my earlier sense of bedazzlement returned as I read Professor Himmelfarb's latest book, *Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians.* The book's title is somewhat misleading, suggesting as it does a study in social history. In fact, Professor Himmelfarb's collection of essays has far more to do with intellectual than with social history. But it is intellectual history of a very special kind, since it deals not with the formal ideas and philosophies of Victorian thinkers, but rather with underlying, only half-articulated premises, with attitudes, states-of-mind, temperaments, and dispositions. Or as Professor Himmelfarb herself puts it, her concern is to delineate the "moral imagination" of the Victorians, "an imagination that penetrates all aspects of life—mind, literature, politics, social affairs, and, of course, personal conduct."

What is so remarkable about Professor Himmelfarb's study is not only that she can actually discern an underlying ethos in an age as complicated and filled with change as the Victorian era, but also that the ethos, or "moral imagination," which she brings to life is quite different from anything we might have expected. When most of us think about Victorian morality, adjectives like "conventional," "proper," "complacent," "hypocritical," and "prudish" immediately spring to mind. According to Professor Himmelfarb, however, the Victorian ethos was not at all conventional or complacent. On the contrary, it was "a culture living on sheer nerve and will, the nerve to know the worst and to will the best"; a culture, moreover, "that was all the more admirable, perhaps, because it tried to maintain itself without the sanctions and consolations of religion. . . ."

This singular image of Victorian culture is so much at variance with the standard view that one's initial reaction is to dismiss it out of hand. But slowly and deliberately, in essay after essay, Professor Himmelfarb unfolds her thesis, until one is finally convinced that this is the way it must have been, after all.

Professor Himmelfarb starts off by reminding us that the Victorian era really dates from before Queen Victoria's reign. It begins with John Wesley, who in the eighteenth century inaugurated an evangelical reform movement within the Church of England known as Wesleyanism, or Methodism. His movement sought to recapture the vitality and scriptural faith of early Christianity, and emphasized such virtues as reverence, sobriety, and prudence. Its phenomenal success, which cut across class lines, led to a largely successful moral reformation, and laid the groundwork for the eventual democratization of English political life.

Although by the middle of the nineteenth century the theology underlying evangelicalism had lost its hold on many of England's most gifted minds, the evangelical spirit, the concern for morality and social reform, remained compelling. "I now believe in nothing," confessed the distinguished Victorian intellectual, Leslie Stephen, "but I do not the less believe in morality. . . . I mean to live and die like a gentleman if possible." Similarly, the novelist George Eliot concluded that belief in God was "inconceivable," immortality was "unbelievable," but moral duty was "peremptory and absolute." And, of course, there was Charles Darwin, who when asked about the implications of his theory for religion and morality, replied that the idea of God was "beyond the scope of man's intellect," but that a man's moral obligation remained what it always had been: to "do his duty."

For Professor Himmelfarb, this transition from a living and sustaining faith in God to a belief in "nothing" is the clue which illuminates the "moral imagination" of the Victorians, and explains their obsession with morality:

> Feeling guilty about the loss of their religious faith, suspecting that that loss might expose them to the temptations of immorality and the perils of nihilism, anticipating the Nietzschean dictum that if God does not exist everything is permitted, they were determined to make of morality a substitute for religion—to make of it, indeed, a form of religion. . . . The duty to be moral, they believed (or wanted desperately to believe), was not God-given but man-made, and it was all the more "peremptory and absolute" for that.

This, then, was the ethos of Victorian civilization during its high tide—a well-nigh fanatical devotion to Christian morality coupled with a stark rejection of Christian theology. It was a rather difficult and demanding act to carry off, and Professor Himmelfarb is right in calling it an admirable attempt. She is also correct, however, in pointing out that it was "too impoverished, too far removed from its original inspiration, to transmit itself to the next generation." And it is with the next generation that the trouble sets in. For the next generation, it turns out, was Bloomsbury.

When it comes to describing Bloomsbury—both its hard core (Van-

Joseph Shattan, a frequent contributor, is a writer living in Washington, D.C.

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essa, Virginia, and Adrian Stephen, Clive Bell, Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Duncan Grant, Desmond MacCarthy, Roger Fry, Saxon Sydney-Turner, and Leonard Woolf) and its circle of "fellow-travellers"(E. M. Forster, James Strachey, R. C. Trevelyan, and others who drifted in and out)—Professor Himmelfarb is a less than sympathetic guide. She is repelled by the group's snobbery, its self-absorption, its contempt for both the masses and the bourgeoisie, its rejection of traditional morality, its elitism, and, not least, its highly irregular sexual mores. Yet over and above these failings, what seems to bother Professor Himmelfarb most deeply about the "Bloomsberries" is their irreverence, their belief, as Keynes once put it, that "we were the forerunners of a new heaven on a new earth." Here Professor Himmelfarb's indictment coincides with that of D. H. Lawrence, who after meeting a group of Bloomsberries declared, "To hear these young people talk really fills me with black fury: They talk endlessly, but endlessly—and never, never a good thing said. . . . There is never for one second any outgoing of feeling and no reverence, not a crumb or grain of reverence. I cannot stand it—I had rather be alone."

At first blush, the emphasis on Bloomsbury's irreverence is puzzling. Bloomsbury had so many glaring faults that it seems arbitrary to single any one of them out for especial censure. But what makes irreverence so objectionable to Professor Himmelfarb is its connection with rationalism and utopianism. To be sure, nowhere in her book does she actually spell out this relation. Yet it is clear that, in her view, irreverence leads almost inevitably to a contempt for what Burke called "all the decent drapery of life . . . all the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our own naked shivering nature." Irreverence, in other words, leads to the rationalistic assumption that all of society's traditions are no more than a collection of taboos and superstitions which the happy and enlightened few can safely dispense with. And when the happy and enlightened few enjoy political power, irreverence leads to utopianism, defined by Professor Himmelfarb as the attempt to achieve "a total transformation of reality—of society, the polity, the economy, above all, of human nature."

Nowhere, I repeat, does Professor Himmelfarb explicitly draw a connection between irreverence, rationalism, and utopianism. Nonetheless, it can hardly be a coincidence that the figures she most clearly detests—the Bloomsberries, Jeremy Bentham, Beatrice and Sidney Webb—are all irreverent, rationalistic, and utopian. Nor can it be coincidental that the figures she most clearly admires—Edmund Burke, Thomas B. Macaulay, George Eliot, Benjamin Disraeli, and Michael Oakeshott—are all respecters of tradition and anti-rationalistic in outlook.

Her treatment of the Webbs is particularly illuminating. I had always supposed that Sidney and Beatrice Webb were liberal reformers, gradualists and social democrats at heart. As is her wont, however, Professor Himmelfarb demonstrates that exactly the opposite was the case. In a remarkable document prepared during the 1920s and entitled *Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain*, the Webbs called for the nationalization of industry, the elimination of privately owned newspapers and journals, the centralized direction and allocation of labor, the discouragement of permanent political parties, the abolition of the House of Lords, and the establishment of two independent and co-equal parliaments. As Professor Himmelfarb dryly notes, "This was no mere 'reform.' "

Nor were the Webbs all that committed to democracy. On the contrary, they favored a strategy called "permeation," which bears a distinct resemblance to the Leninist idea of "boring from within." As Professor Himmelfarb explains it, "permeation" meant that socialism would be brought about "not by the direct action of the working class but by a small group of knowledgeable, capable, well-placed people who would permeate the institutions that were the source of power and who would initiate the necessary reforms." The Webbs' ideal (again not unlike the Leninist ideal) was government in the name of the people, but by the experts.

But although the Webbs were committed to the remaking of society along "scientific" lines, Beatrice Webb's diary reveals that she maintained a secret affinity for religious mysticism, a powerful but unrequited longing to belong to a church. Eventually she resolved her personal problems by becoming a passionate defender of the Soviet Union. In her view, the Soviet Communist party overcame the contradiction between science and religion, since it was a "religious order" complete with "strict disciplines" and "vows of obedience and poverty" which nevertheless presided over a program of revolutionary social change not unlike the plan she and her husband had outlined in their *Constitution*.

If the Webbs represent an almost perfect case study of the relationship between political rationalism, on the one hand, and the "totalitarian temptation," on the other, then the thought of the distinguished conservative philosopher, Michael Oakeshott, constitutes one of the most persuasive attacks against rationalism mounted in this century. (Oakeshott, of course, is no Victorian, but Professor Himmelfarb justifies the inclusion of her essay on him on the grounds that his "mode of thought . . . recalls an earlier, more spacious and civilized time.") According to Professor Himmelfarb, "For Oakeshott, Rationalism is the great heresy of modern times. The Rationalist, taking 'reason' as his only authority, is necessarily hostile to any other authority: tradition, habit, custom, prejudice, common sense. . . . The Rationalist has no respect for the seemingly irrational vestiges of the past, and little patience with the transitory arrangements of the present. He has only an overwhelming yearning for a future in which all will be made orderly, reasonable, of maximum utility and efficiency. And he would like this future to be realized as soon as possible." Unfortunately, "the conjunction of dreaming [about the future] and ruling generates tyranny."

But while Oakeshott's attack against rationalism (which he insists on capitalizing) is quite effective, the alternative he offers—a kind of generalized skepticism towards all ideas and principles, even nominally "conservative" ideas and principles—seems insufficient to Professor Himmelfarb:

> Skepticism is innocent enough, even attractive, in an age suffering from a surfeit of principles and enjoying a plenitude of good habits. One can then rely happily enough on those habits without inquiring into their source, their substance, or the reason for their perpetuation. But when those habits become insecure or fall into disuse, the conservative must look elsewhere for the civilized values he has come to enjoy.

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Where, then, does Professor Himmelfarb look for the defense of civilized values? Perhaps it is not being overly presumptuous to suggest that it is to the memory of a culture that lived "on sheer nerve and will." True, she herself demonstrates that the Victorian attempt to make a religion of morality ultimately proved untenable.

At the same time, however, it is Professor Himmelfarb's hope that the recollection of that heroic and noble failure "may fortify us as we persist in our quest for some new synthesis that will herald some brave—or not so brave—new world." In which case, of course, the Victorian ethos will prove not to have been such an irrevocable failure, after all. □

SEXUAL DESIRE: A MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE EROTIC

Roger Scruton/The Free Press/$25.00

Shirley Robin Letwin

A good test of how someone regards individuality is his attitude to love and sexuality. But this is a peculiarly uncomfortable test for individualists who are opposed to the current permissiveness. They find it difficult to answer the libertarian argument that a proper respect for individuality requires complete freedom for each individual to express and fulfill himself as he wishes. And they are uncomfortable about finding themselves allied with the long-faced enemies of earthly pleasures, as well as with paternalists longing to increase collective regulation of private lives.

There is no help to be had from the traditional discussions of erotic love, either for defending individuality or for resisting permissiveness. The pattern for all these discussions was set long ago by Plato's *Symposium*, where Diotima tells Socrates that the proper pursuit of love consists in freeing the divinity in each lover from the adulterating human vessel. Love is truly consummated by unifying the souls, not the bodies, of lovers; and the most perfect expression of love is the willingness to give up the world for it, since in death the soul becomes wholly free of the body. But in a soul ruled by passion instead of reason, the lover will crave for bodily union which is an illusory kind of wholeness. Such a lover will be in constant turmoil, pursuing one object after another because, being an illusion, none can satisfy him.

Plato's diseased soul became the hero of the romantic ideal of love, of which the classic account is Stendhal's *De l'Amour*. Here love is described as a "crystallization," which is a "collection of strange fancies which we weave round our idea of the loved one." These fancies with all their attendant pleasures are produced by the beloved's ability to stimulate the lover's imagination, much as the grit in the oyster irritates it into producing a pearl. Love is accordingly an illusion that has to be maintained by continuous stimulation to the imagination. The pain of fear is essential to this love because pain is an important ingredient of erotic pleasure. If the loved one, Stendhal warns, should fall into "the enormous error of killing fear by the eagerness of her transports, the illusion of love will cease." Beyond that and above all else, love is threatened by the intrusion of reality, especially in the shape of respect for moral considerations.

Both Stendhal and Plato regard such lovers as indifferent to each other's personality; they only enjoy and exploit the separateness of their bodies. But whereas Plato describes such love as a disease, Stendhal praises it for being an illusion, thus explicitly opposing the satisfaction of desire to the requirements of morality. Whereas Plato urges man to choose divinity, Stendhal urges him to employ his superior cunning so as to enjoy his brutishness. But neither holds out any hope of a relationship between beings who are separate and unique and take an erotic interest in each other which embraces their personalities and is not at war with standards of civilized conduct.

The individualist looking for a more satisfactory account of erotic love might hope to find it in Roger Scruton's *Sexual Desire*, since the publisher claims that "the author upholds traditional morality but in terms that will prove shocking to many of his practitioners." Certainly Scruton explicitly addresses himself to overcoming the divorce between sexuality and morality. The way to moralize sexuality, he argues, is to recognize that its proper object is a person, and that the conventional moral restraints are designed to enforce the pursuit of this object. Scruton thus promises to provide an answer to permissiveness in the name of a proper regard for individuality.

How far he has been successful depends on what he means by a "person." Its meaning is well buried in dense prose purporting to give a professional philosophical analysis of concepts such as "intentionality," or else offering a description in titillating detail of the nature of sexual arousal. Nevertheless, the persevering reader is left in no doubt that Scruton considers individuality to be an illusion. He firmly rejects any suggestion that people are "quintessential individuals." He speaks of an individual as a "first-person spectre" and describes our belief that we are possessed of "quintessential individuality" as a "point of view" due to our inability to "describe the world objectively from no point of view within it." If such objectivity were possible, Scruton assures us that "the 'self' and all its mysteries would vanish." Our lack of such objectivity, however, does explain why the illusion of individuality is "well-founded."

This "well-founded illusion," and not any real person, is the object of sexual desire. Scruton accordingly explains that in our efforts to satisfy sexual desire, "we are attempting to unite our bodies with a non-existent 'owner' who is unable to possess the individuality for which he craves but sustains the illusion of his own existence as a reflection in the glass of another's eye." In other words, the object of desire acquires its semblance of a person from the lover's "individuating thoughts." The personality of the beloved is therefore described by Scruton as "the great metaphysical illusion of love." It is an "intellectual lapse" just like the "fallacy" that leads us to believe, wrongly, that works of art are "peculiarly unified objects": "It is erroneously supposed that the work of art possesses, as a peculiar metaphysical property, the individuality with which our attitude endows it." Here Scruton adopts the fashionable aesthetic theory that the unity of an aesthetic object is not created by the artist but imposed by the observer. Though we may see a mosque "as possessing an individuality," in reality it is, Scruton teaches, only a "heap of stones," just as the animal body is the only reality behind the illusion of love.

The one difference between the two illusions is that the lover's is more vulnerable to attack by reality. The illusion of a mosque's individuality remains even though "I know that it is a heap of stones which bears no more unity than I am able to impose upon it": but "every love stands to be jeopardized by the new knowledge that will destroy the vital belief." And the results of this knowledge "may be catastrophic" because it turns love into "a systematic disappointment."

Although Scruton mentions Stendhal just in passing, his conception of erotic love is fundamentally the same. Only the possessiveness that Scruton ascribes to the lover is more blatantly brutal and indifferent to the beloved's personality. Scruton's lover wants to "overcome the other" so as to compel

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her to acknowledge that she is being "overwhelmed." Everything in the beloved that conveys the impression of such submission is what arouses the lover. Disinterested love is therefore an impossibility. And in any conflict between the good of the beloved and her availability to the lover, the lover is bound, Scruton says, "to sacrifice your good, to fight against your career, your friendship, your activity, everything that gives you the chance to live happily without me." Indeed he will "rejoice in your faults since they may be the sign of your dependence."

The resemblance to Stendhal is neither accidental nor superficial because both doctrines rest on the same conception of human beings. Scruton emphasizes throughout that "human nature is dual" and that human beings are divided between their rational and animal halves. And he accepts the implications of this duality when he takes sexual desire to be attached to the animal part and denies that it is voluntary. It follows that sexual arousal "is something suffered, not something done." We prefer to endow love with "the character of a decision" because it allows us to suppose that even while "being overcome by the other," we can still preserve our "inner freedom." But in reality, love is a "compulsion," a "bodily imperative" due to animal "urges" and "impulses." Sexual organs are "the conduit of the body's orders, the instrument of its rule. Whatever happens to me through it, expresses the body's command." There is no escape from the body's "sovereignty."

Scruton has translated Stendhal's literary account into the technical language preferred nowadays and has embellished it with Sartrian trimmings. But in all his assertions about the sovereignty of the body in sexual desire Scruton is at one with the traditional accounts of erotic love. What then does he offer that is new? It is his refusal to recognize, as his predecessors have, that if sexuality and morality are connected with antagonistic parts of human nature, they cannot be reconciled. Scruton accepts the traditional antinomy but attaches it to a different conclusion, that "the ideal of virtue" is "one of 'sexual integrity,'" where "sexuality is entirely integrated into a life of personal affection in which the self and its responsibility are centrally involved and indissolubly linked to the pleasures and possession of the body."

Unfortunately Scruton offers no coherent argument to support this virtuous conclusion. He not only denies that the object of sexual desire is a real person, but carelessly moves from saying that the illusion of a person *is* the object of sexual desire to the conclusion that this illusion *ought to be* what we seek, without taking notice of the transition from an "is" to an "ought." Throughout his book, he vacillates between an analytical description of sexuality and a moral prescription. Moreover, insofar as he is prescribing what we ought to do, he is violating traditional morality, not defending it as he claims. For the pursuit of an illusion is traditionally a vice, not a virtue. Worst of all, when Scruton informs us that sexual desire is not a "decision" under our control, he denies that sexual desire can be subject to moral judgment, thereby declaring that to reconcile sexuality and morality is impossible.

The impression of incoherence in Scruton's book is reinforced by his remarks about the relation of his doctrine to that of other philosophers. Though he does not discuss Stendhal, he does say, for instance, that he has shown the way to achieving "happiness" in Aristotle's sense. But he overlooks the metaphysical postulate of Aristotle's idea of happiness—a cosmic hierarchy of being which rises from matter to spirit. To seek sexual enjoyment in the manner recommended by Scruton is hardly compatible with Aristotle's requirement that the different potentialities be realized in the right order, that is to say, that the animal potentialities be well subordinated to the spiritual ones. Indeed, to unite the animal and spiritual aspects of human nature in the manner suggested by Scruton is inconceivable in Aristotle's terms. That is why Aquinas, having accepted those features of Aristotle's metaphysics, felt obliged to explain why God did not bid men to sin when He commanded them to multiply. And there is no resemblance to Scruton's recipe in Aquinas's prescription that a married couple may engage in sexual congress without sinning as long as they remain wholly uninvolved emotionally. C. S. Lewis remarked that this relationship, far from sanctioning marital love, bore an uncomfortable resemblance to the "cold sensuality of Tiberius in Capri."

The only substantial novelty in Scruton's doctrine is his conception of morality, which is indeed surprising if not shocking. The essence of morality, according to Scruton, is compulsion. This conception of morality leads him to maintain that sado-masochism need not be a perversion, and should be recognized as a normal part of the canon of sexual possibilities because "an intelligible moral relation between effective equals finds embodiment in a sexual act."

The "intelligible moral relation" in sado-masochism consists in mutual "chastisement." As he considers chastisement to be a "moral idea," Scruton concludes that sado-masochism is "through and through saturated by a moral idea." For the partners are concentrating not on "the body and its sufferings" but on "the moral idea of chastisement." Beyond the bedroom, the whip that maintains the bond between sexuality and morality is wielded by what Scruton calls "the state," whose institutions insure "the marshaling and directing of animal urges towards an interpersonal aim." And in keeping with this enthusiastic endorsement of compulsion by the state, Scruton condemns the idea of "a spontaneous social order" as "an illusion fed upon . . . the fables of Adam Smith and Friedrich von Hayek." If either erotic love or private property is to survive, he warns us, "it is not sufficient to leave their future to the 'spontaneous social order' of the neo-conservatives" because "civil society is nothing without the state." And for good measure, he includes liberalism among the enemies of erotic love, calling it "the natural philosophy of the 'desacralized' world."

This reference to a "desacralized world" is the only connection between Scruton's thesis and his idea of marriage. Though he does not otherwise refer to religious truth, he announces that "in marriage I 'undertake' an obligation that precedes my choice and which resides in the scheme of things. Not surprisingly, therefore, marriage is a religious 'sacrament.'" Furthermore, "marriage imposes on the bond of erotic love the non-contractual and pious arrangement of the home."

This is hardly a consistent view of marriage. For one thing, nothing that Scruton tells us explains the virtue of the "home." On the contrary, given his exaltation of the "state," it would be more reasonable for him to regard the "home" with suspicion because it can become a dangerous focus for individualism, as some recent histories have shown. Nor is it at all clear why, if the sexual bond is as irresistible as Scruton

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believes, it should be necessary or desirable to impose on it the marriage bond. Nor does his eulogy of marriage take account of the exchange of vows and the idea of a contract that is central in the traditional marriage ceremonies. Of course, vows are not easily exchanged between metaphysical illusions.

Had Scruton taken a more serious interest in religion he might have noticed that the Christian idea of love has suggested the pattern of a genuine reconciliation of sexuality with morality. The love that ties God and man in the Christian picture does not rest on any unity or identity between them since God is a wholly different kind of being from man. It is rather an appreciation of a distinct kind of being, which rests not on approval or admiration but on a will to love. The object of God's love is not any part of any man, nor the species as a whole, but each person, in all his individuality, as an independent substance. Here then is a love that is wholly a decision, and wholly real, because its object is neither a projection of the lover's imagination nor a temporarily imprisoned spirit but a distinct, unique, existing personality.

A lover of this sort is to be found throughout English literature, from Chaucer on. He is discussed brilliantly in John Bayley's *The Characters of Love*, which does not appear in Scruton's lengthy and exotic bibliography. This English view of love is minutely explored, though in different ways, by both Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope, among others. It postulates that human beings are not, as Scruton believes, divided selves or at most spiritualized animals, but wholly unified intelligent beings whose rational experience includes a variety of kinds of perceptions. They are not the victims of their bodies because they necessarily choose how to interpret and respond to whatever sensations they experience. And their personalities are revealed in all their attributes, both bodily and mental. Since the object of their love is a real person, not an illusion, and since this sort of lover is the maker of his love, not a victim of it, he can choose to take into account moral as well as other considerations without destroying his love. He is therefore nothing like Scruton's obsessively possessive lover—Jane Austen's Mr. Knightley insists on teaching Emma to correct her faults just because he loves her. In short, the reader in search of an answer to permissiveness that shows proper regard for individuality would do much better to read Jane Austen or Anthony Trollope than Roger Scruton.

Professor Scruton misleads the reader not only about sex and morality but also about politics. For he is not, as he claims to be, a conservative, certainly not a conservative of the English sort. It is true that conservatives emphasize that we must draw on the resources of civilization in order to cultivate and appreciate individuality, and that these resources are made available to us by the traditions and institutions of our communal life. But Scruton is saying something very different, that the "human person" is an "artefact" of "collective endeavour," that is to say, not a reality resident in every human being. In reducing human individuality to an illusion arising out of social life and resting ultimately on the force exercised by the state, Scruton is at odds with the distinctive moral and political tradition of England.

That tradition emphatically rejects the view that he attributes to both conservatives and Aristotle, that the *polis* is founded upon "a perception of the nature of domestic relations and of the erotic bond which underlies them." This is an extraordinary reading of Aristotle, who unmistakably defines the *polis* as a form of association distinct from and independent of the relationships of family and tribe. Similarly, the idea that runs through all of British political practice, as well as philosophy, is that civil association is distinguished by its ability, which is indeed its justification, to contain within itself a variety of other forms of association. But Scruton's idea of a civil society is nothing more than an extended tribe, with "the state" its chieftain issuing commands to regulate the lives of his subjects. Nothing could be further from either Aristotle's *polis* or the British constitution.

Scruton has no sympathy for the importance attached to human individuality in British political practice and philosophical thought. Yet that regard for individuality is associated with a rejection of the belief that human beings have a divided nature, and with—what is an implication of that belief—an insistence that sexual behavior is necessarily part of moral conduct. In this view, if men behave like beasts it is not because their bodies have taken over but because they have chosen to adopt the behavior of beasts. A philosophical exploration of this tradition would be able to show how sexuality can be reconciled with morality. But no such new moral understanding, nor indeed any coherent understanding, is to be found in Scruton's book. At best, he offers a sado-masochistic solution to the mind-body problem. For conservatives, his book may serve as a test of their ability to recognize and resist siren voices. □

THE WHITE HOUSE MESS

Christopher Buckley/Alfred A. Knopf/$16.95

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

This is the memoir of the unfortunate Mr. Herbert Wadlough, accountant, factotum to the governor of the great state of Idaho, and finally deputy chief of staff to President Thomas N. Tucker, Ronald Reagan's successor (if Christopher Buckley has anything to say about it). Mr. Wadlough is a man who has suffered bodily injury on numerous occasions for his devotion to the commonweal and to the Tucker legend. Readers of refined sensibility will find his suffering sycophantic and repellent. More intelligent readers will only note that Wadlough bled a lot, while we laughed.

Wadlough is afflicted by allergies, a weak constitution (he prefers a steaming cup of hot water to strong matutinal coffees or teas), and dim vision. He relies on his glasses, thick ones,

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. is editor-in-chief of The American Spectator.

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which fog up in time of strenuous exertion and fall off in time of danger; as when Mrs. Thomas N. Tucker assaulted him while wielding a chintz pillow with "surprising force." The violence occurred in the executive quarters of the White House itself, and there the First Lady bashed him to the floor, pinned him behind a door ("I could hear her exertions on the other side as she leaned against the door, attempting, I would guess, to inhibit the flow of oxygen into my lungs"), and belabored him about the calves and shins with her shoes ("I was grateful she was not wearing high heels"). Upon retreating from her enraged presence, Wadlough is summoned downstairs to the Oval Office, and there he promptly impales himself on one of his President's favorite *objets d'art*, Frederick Hart's "Javelin."

Herbert Wadlough is the kind of precious boob whose eminence would never take him beyond jerkwater in any age but our own gorgeous era, an era when mass education puffs up millions, educating them beyond their means and booting them up with a software of high-flown patois to conceal their essential oafishness. In *The House of Intellect* Jacques Barzun, writing in the late 1950s, warned of the dangers that modern education posed to the mind. Now, with education reigning over us like an established church, our society is suffused with stupidity and mediocrity unimaginable a few decades ago, even in jerkwater.

Following in the hoof prints of thousands of other would-be Harry Hopkinses and Harold Ickeses, this Wadlough has come to Washington to serve his master and his cartoon vision of history. On Capitol Hill and in each presidential administration such amusing stoneheads are plentiful. Our own Ronald Reagan has employed them, and recently he has suffered on account of their petty shenanigans. They fret over corner offices, parking spaces for themselves and their staffs, White House mess permits, and other such immensities. They are, while they last, renowned Machiavels, held in awe by the pols and the journalists alike. Then they pass on. No longer are they the celebrated figures on the Washington cocktail circuit. Some are indicted.

When Christopher Buckley, Priscilla Buckley's nephew, served as speechwriter to Vice President George Bush he collected every telling detail of high political life, carefully pasting them into his notebooks. Now, as an amused Tacitus, he returns, and in creating the memoir of Wadlough he has written one of the most hilarious books on Washington ever to come to my attention, and I once read every memoir written by the immortal memoirists of the Carter administration. I slaved away on that project for several hours of a summer afternoon; no restoratives were allowed me until the last word of the last page of the last preposterous book. Through the pages of this splendid tome walk many of the greatest figures of our capital city, a city that is proud to call itself "The Most Important City in the World." Read it and you will recognize some of the giants of recent times.

For the immortal Wadlough there are only discomfitures and misadventures. There is the time the President's young son inadvertently knees him in his private parts. Of course his glasses fell off. Why the young man kneed him inadvertently I cannot fathom; Wadlough deserved it. Then there is the time when the President telephoned whilst Wadlough was showering. A dutiful maid thrust the telephone into the shower, nearly electrocuting him and leaving him sprawled across the bathroom floor bruised, bleeding, and, of course, bereft of his glasses. On the Eastern shuttle he hears that his President has been shot, begs to use the plane's radio, and is immediately identified as a crank. Flight attendants batter him mercilessly. Once on the ground he is arrested and reluctant White House personnel have to go down to the lock-up to spring him. Finally there is the time that the wretch—dubbed "Auntie Herbert" by the White House staff—is summoned to accompany President Tucker on one of his seaside walks. This one takes place along slippery rocks beside raging waters and ends with the President falling head first to certain death were his fall not broken by the hapless Wadlough crawling beneath him. Wadlough is confined to hospital with "contusions of the forehead, a fractured clavicle and a ruptured plantaris."

The Tucker presidency was not a success. He attempted all the wimp gimmicks of the New Age Progressive, and he was rendered absurd and futile. Castro befools him, and the revolutionary leader of Bermuda creates a genuine threat to national security. Tucker's seaside fall takes place during his idiotic reelection campaign, a campaign that put me in mind of Jimmy Carter's last great venture into mass seduction. Seizing the moment, Tucker's PR experts turn the fall into a feat of Tuckerian heroism and announce that it was Tucker who saved Wadlough. Now begins what Wadlough himself calls his time of "public humiliation." The President is presented with scores of good samaritan awards from the Republic's scores of do-gooder organizations. Into every award banquet the presidential aides roll Wadlough, now confined to a wheelchair. This was indeed a low point, but there are so many others, my favorite being when, to mollify a world-wide outcry against President Tucker's use of harmless sleep-inducing gas against Bermudian revolutionaries, Wadlough is gassed on the "Today Show" to demonstrate the benign nature of the vapors.

Christopher Buckley has created a comic figure comparable in grandeur to the Ignatius Reilly of John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*. In an agelastic city Buckley has written a very amusing book about the misogelastic toadies. Priscilla will be proud. □

PROVIDENCE
Geoffrey Wolff/Viking–Elisabeth Sifton Books/$16.95

Thomas Mallon

Yale University alumni between 34 and 38 will remember the spring of 1970 for the trial of Bobby Seale in downtown New Haven. It was cool. Some of them put up Panther supporters in their dorm rooms. (Before, that is, they blew off the rest of the semester: Cambodia, Kent State—the *Strike*). I never went to Yale. I was a freshman at Brown that year. We had our strike, of course, but we had a trial, too. There was a big one that went on in the courthouse down the hill. Ours wasn't for a Panther, it was for Raymond Patriarca, the Mr. Big of the whole New England Mafia, a guy to whom Skull and Bones meant skulls and bones, not some club.

This tells you something about the difference between Yale and Brown in those days. This was Brown before JFK, Jr. started going there, before Amy Carter started sitting in in the administration building against apartheid. Before Brown stopped being the backwater of the Ivy League and got chic, which is to say before Cosima von Bülow started going there, which is to say years before her father (allegedly) sent her mommy on "that long journey to napland."

That quotation is from Geoffrey Wolff, who's just written the great Providence novel—not about "rich-bitch Brownies" on Thayer Street, but about the rest of that "runt town of 156,000," that tight little gear box of hoods and lawyers and judges and small-timers that's still not so different from the way it was in 1970. About the Providence we Brownies went into a couple of times a year. Wolff describes things a little differently than we would have—"The bakery was within handgun range of Atwells Avenue"—but he makes me remember a lot of the streets he's talking about. My friends and I once or twice forayed into Manny Almeida's Ringside lounge ("Where You Meet the Leading Sports Figures of the World," the sign said, meaning, I think, guys who used to wrestle in South Attleboro). Manny's had a separate ladies' entrance, and we thought Diane Johnson was a great girl to put up with that in 1972. We never, so far as I remember, went to Federal Hill, which Geoffrey Wolff knows about and which was populated by the ethnic group from which the Governor of New York State descends. Federal Hill? "When someone up there whispers 'be careful' to a convict, or a member of a jury, this is not the same as when your mom says 'be careful.' " No, College Hill was not Federal Hill, and never for long are those particular twain going to intertwine. (However: today's paper—March 13, 1986—reports that some Brown coeds have been busted as part of a prostitution ring, which strikes me as the closest amalgamation of town ethos and gown ethos I've ever heard of, considerably more realistic than the schemes of "community involvement" Brown students used to talk about in the early seventies.)

Anyway, Geoffrey Wolff has dropped me off on memory lane. But let me tell you: if WJAR, and the Turk's Head Building, and Almacs supermarkets and dee-jay "Salty" Brine (all in this novel) set off not one bell, nor crumble for you a single Proustian cookie, you should still buy this novel because it's probably the best one that's going to come out in America in 1986. You want Baltimore, go to Anne Tyler. Boston? James Carroll. West Texas? Larry McMurtry. But those places are out, and Providence is in. Geoffrey Wolff is best known for his biographies of the wacked-out poet Harry Crosby (*Black Sun*) and his own philandering dad (*The Duke of Deception*), but from

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now on he's going to be as important to Providence history as Mayor Vincent "Buddy" Cianci (indicted, okay, but popular), or—sit down—S. J. Perelman, Brown '25. Yes, he's as good.

Providence opens with the death of The Moron, a hood, definitely small time: "the bad-looking mess leaking stuff on the sidewalk" is his body. It's in a cargo net hanging from a tow-truck's crane. Adam Dwyer detours to avoid it. He's got other things on his mind: his son's birthday and the suspicion he himself's got leukemia. He's got it, all right—his cells are "banging around like corn in the popper"—and it's a shame. Because Adam is a nice guy, good husband, good dad, Boy Scout lawyer, even does public defense. His wife Clara is nice, too. Unfortunately, we learn a lot about their characters from Wolff's inventory of items that get ripped off from their house by Skippy Carbone. Skippy often works with Baby ("It's a one-tape job . . . We'll be listening to Tom Waits side A when we leave Providence, and side B will still be playing when we get home"). Baby is the one Skippy later wishes could be at his trial, for moral support, but that can't be because Baby happens to be the corpse that provokes the particular legal proceedings that so upset Skippy. (Baby got his face blown away with a nail gun.) Not even Lisa shows up, and she and Skip used to be very tight. After they saw *Babylon Pink* together, Skippy wanted them to try out some of the positions, "but Lisa was too wasted to figure out where to put her ankles." Nice girl, Lisa: not "an uncaring person, she just didn't have an awesome memory." She never shoulda slept with Tom, though. Tom used to be a good cop, didn't like envelopes (offer him one and Tom "would cuff your hands behind your back and maybe fuck up your Rolex"), but oh, Lisa messed up his head very bad.

The man who directs the music of these spheres is The Boss, who once responded to a question of Bobby Kennedy's about people stuffed in a trunk with his own interrogative: "Trunk? Car, or steamer?" Why can't they leave the guy alone? Today he's just "an old fart in his peejays, with diabetes and a crummy pump, vegging out on *All My Children, As the World Turns*, refusing to watch or even think about *General Hospital*."

I'm not going to explain any more of the plot, because that's often unnecessary and unkind in a review. But I want to make more points: like forget John Gregory Dunne. Good as *Dutch Shea, Jr.* was, *Providence* is better. I don't know who the narrator is, but he's the last of the all-time greased chameleons, in and out of every id and larynx in the book. Very instructive, too. I like a narrator who talks to the reader, patiently: "You think these things just happened? He fucking made them happen." Listen, I'm no less over-ego-blown than any other reviewer. I don't like to give away any more of my 1200 words to quotations from the author than is absolutely necessary. So how come all I want to keep doing is quoting this guy, this guy who's so good with the verbs that he doesn't say shame *leads to* rage, or shame *feeds* rage, he says shame *manures* rage?

Forget John O'Hara, too, although I can't think of any writer any other writer should more like to be compared to. But there was always something a little creepy about O'Hara. Always a little too bilious to be real fun. Geoffrey Wolff, though, is a different story. There's plenty of psychology here, like O'Hara had (both Adam and Clara want to get rid of their golden retriever at different points: it's too *healthy* for him to look at, and the goddamned dog *saw* the burglar make advances to her, and she's not going to live with someone who's seen that). And he's got a sense of regional *history*, "before windchill factors," same as O'Hara:

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there's a nice chapter on the Triangle Trade—the slave-and-rum-running that helped build, among other things, Brown University and Adam Dwyer's old-line family guilt complex. But he's also got a heart (truth is, O'Hara hated a lot of his characters), and this is, finally, a novel to break the heart: "For Clara, there was no end. Her husband died and died"—all through the book, and we've got to watch it too, go through the hopeless "marrow harvest" and everything else: "They took his marrow when it was good marrow, mezzo-mezzo marrow, to return it when it got worse." We've got to watch Clara and Adam make up new rules. She won't let him say "chemo": "Please, no abbreviations, no familiarities, no fraternizing with the enemy."

I'm not going to close on a downer like this, though. I'm going to mention one more Providence memory. When I was a student there, a friend of mine, a native Rhode Islander, told me that there was a grand total of one straight auto-body shop in the state. I didn't think this was a particularly interesting fact, because I was too high-minded and young to realize in those days that crooked auto-body shops have far more to do with real life than invasions of Cambodia, just as the Mafia is a far more enduring and significant institution than the Black Panthers (screw you, Yale!). Geoffrey Wolff knows all of this, and much more besides, and he's no doubt known it for a long time, and he's probably one of the best writers in America. I can tell you that each of the few times I put this book down I looked at the jacket photograph of the author and wished, with distressing envy, that I could write about a third as well. □

GERALD'S PARTY

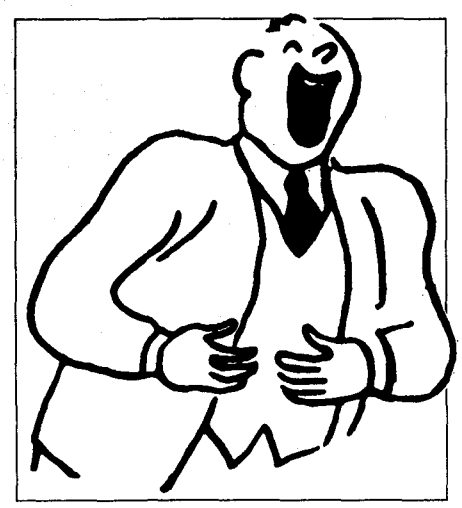
Robert Coover/Linden Press-Simon and Schuster/$17.95

James Harkness

Superficially, Robert Coover's new novel is an antic send-up of murder mysteries: roughly the British drawing room variety, where the detective knows his tropical fish as well as his criminology, and where the suspects are always bursting out with lines like, "My word, Lord Effingwod! Are you suggesting that someone put curare in the scones on *purpose*?!" So far as I can tell, the unfortunate victims are, in order of dispatch:

1) Ros, actress/floozy—Icepick
2) Roger, jealous husband—Croquet mallet
3)Tania, painter/Earth mother—Bathtub drowning
4)Vic, narrator's best friend—Gunshot wounds

I say "so far as I can tell," because it's pretty much impossible to keep track of all the malaise, madness, vapors, and violence that afflict the revelers—much less to distinguish the real mayhem from the unreal, or the surreal from either. What happens in *Gerald's Party* is, sort of and (not that it matters) not in sequence: At a point during a party when the host, Gerry, and his guests are "still on our feet . . . [but] no longer that attentive," the first body is discovered: Ros, her blood "still fountaining from a hole between her breasts, soaking her silvery frock, puddling the carpet." Consternation reigns—distraction, anyway. The police are summoned and soon arrive, Inspector Pardew and a pair of Keystone Kops flunkies named Fred and Bob. Clues and evidence are collected; investigations and interrogations go forward; new murders occur, along with adulteries and dangerous liaisons; poignant reminiscences give way to ominous intent; shifting alliances form and dissolve; old friends and recent neighbors drop in; a *tableau vivant* is staged; Gerry's wife pillages the refrigerator for more *hors d'oeuvres*; his disparaging mother-in-law has endless trouble keeping his kid in bed; and throughout everything, Gerry himself mopes portentously about Love, Life, Art, Theater, and Time.



Time, especially—since Time, not Crime, is the real object of ratiocination in *Gerald's Party*. *"Time . . . It's a mockery! A corruption!* We're talking about *time*! It's the *key* to it all, it *always* is, the key to *everything*!" A few subtle hints from Inspector Pardew, whose name, after all, sounds a good deal like *perdu*—as in, yes, could be, *les Temps perdus* . . . ! Time! Time *lost*—get it? Having collected the wristwatches of all the guests, the inspector will determine the first murder to have taken place precisely one half hour *after* his arrival, prompting one among many reveries that swerve, stagger, and reel drunkenly along under their load of Significance:

> We tend to think of time as something that passes by . . . a kind of endless flow, like a river, coming out of nowhere and going into nowhere, with space the theater in which this drama of pure process is acted out. . . . But what if it's the other way around? What if it's the world that's insubstantial, time the immovable stage for its ghostly oscillations? . . . And *if* it's a stage . . . *if* it's there in its entirety, the script all written, so to speak, a kind of cyclodrama which seems to move only because we, like these [wristwatch] hands here, move through it, then it should be possible, if we could just overcome our perceptual limitations, to visit any *part* of it, including the *no-longer* and the *not-yet*!

That hardly a page turns without this boffo, pseudo-philosophical bludgeoning may in fact be the true crime of the evening. Yet it's hard to know how seriously, if at all, the author intends us to take it, since *Gerald's Party* veers back and forth from High Chrono-Ontology to parody erotics and mincing bidet jokes with utter capriciousness. Meanwhile, plot, character, and voice decompose (Coover might prefer "deconstruct") into a weird series of moony monologues, dispersed dialogues, and fractured colloquies, interlinked with the drugged, distantly alarming illogic of a bad dream.

A moebius-strip concatenation of all the suburban booze-bashes that ever went down in flames at four a.m., the scenes that make up *Gerald's Party* merge and emerge from one another like swallows or alligators in an M.C. Escher print. Yet their architecture is so static, so brittle, and at last so bizarrely arbitrary in its contrivances that at various points I began to suspect it of actually having been created by some banal external mechanism: like the secret anagrams Saussure thought he saw in Ovid's poetry, or the queer processes of narrative generation described by Raymond Roussel in *Comment j'ai écrit certains des mes livres*. Textual evidence may even support such an interpretation—for instance, the musings of Inspector Pardew (who has, on the whole, the role of Readers' Guide to this item of Periodical Literature) on the possibility that he may be in the presence of "some unspeakable crime-within-a-crime, some dalliance, as it were . . . *with oblivion itself.*" Are signposts like these, so blatant at times that they might be labeled "directions for use," genuine clues to an honest mystery? Or are they, along with all the chic jargon-juggling about "synchronicity" and "self-referentiality," essentially satirical? Do they have the function of another traditional element of crime fiction: the red herring, a spurious datum or event introduced to throw the detective (and the reader) off the scent? Thus the central puzzle of Coover's capering conundrum: not so much who is the "author" of the crime—nor even whether, in life as in language and literature, crime admits of being solved—but whether there is not a lacuna between "crime" and "solution," reality and its reconstruction, that renders the subordination of one to the other unstable, ever reversible, and finally, radically beside the point.

What there is in Coover's book, in other words, is enough grad-school folderol to keep a whole Comp-Lit department wired into the wee hours of the night—fodder enough for a real party even, say a faculty get-together where (we all know the drill) people stumble past in an agreeable haze of cannabis and Gallo Hearty Burgundy, and where amid the random (Heisenberg? Uncertainty!) jostle of tweedy shoulders and the graceful swoop of peasant skirts (Arlene! Germaine! Come on *in*!), there might be overheard fragments of a babble-collage, winding threads of conversational critique, rendering collective verdict on *Gerald's Party*:

"—certain rich wildness, untamed, Flaubertian abandonment to excess—"

"—knockoff of *The Erasers*, handled with ["—Feedback loop—"] much less elan . . ."

"—in my (Elliott! Marcie! Glad t' *see* ya!) view an exercise in structuralist *dechiffrement*—"

"Ironically, for a book about time, a kind of anachronism in and of itself, a hallucinatory sixties metafiction, as embarrassingly—"

["—like finding your path through a Labyrinth by following the minotaur's farts. Strangely effective in its way, but certainly an odious experience . . ."]

"—*passé* as a tie-dyed T-shirt—hey, Roxanne, love your tropical fish, baby! But what the hell's this *stuff* in the cheese balls?" □

James Harkness is a writer and translator who lives in upstate New York.

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CORRESPONDENCE
(continued from page 9)

with a fundamental shift in that correlation. This led Khrushchev to reformulate peaceful coexistence *offensively*. The West had permitted socialism to spread to many countries while preventing this had been in its power. Perhaps, little by little, it could be got to accept the idea that bourgeois anti-Communist society should exist fully in only one country, and then perhaps not even there.

When the U.S. chose containment, it chose to leave the Soviets in possession of a number of "captive nations," and not even to assert its right under various wartime agreements. The doctrine of containment did, however, envisage that in the long run the Soviet regime might be squeezed into changing, and that the captive people might be freed. Containment, then, was theoretically open to both offensive and static interpretations. But the Soviets might have wondered how tight the squeeze would be that began with such restraint! In 1956, when the West failed to help the victorious Hungarian rebellion, precisely the kind of event that an "offensive" view of containment envisaged, room for doubt narrowed. It shrank further when the U.S., against de Gaulle's advice, let stand the Berlin wall and its message: Whatever anyone's preference the future belongs to us! By the 1960s, the U.S. foreign policy establishment had clearly chosen to accommodate expanding Soviet influence. . . .

The Soviets noted that the U.S. foreign policy establishment treated defeats for the West as if they were victories. To people steeped in class analysis this was catnip. Could a contradiction be developing between the American foreign policy class and the rest of the country?

Vietnam answered that question. As ordinary Americans lost time, blood, and life in that struggle, the American foreign policy establishment was happy to see a manifestation of America of which they profoundly disapproved "contained" right off the mainland of Asia and dishonored at home. Since Vietnam, the U.S. foreign policy establishment has scored other victories—détente and arms control—which it defends strenuously against other Americans who want to change course.

To change course, however, is to change people—and that's the reason so many in my audience growled. Let me quote the most unpalatable sentences I uttered as "Boris":

> Those "Present at the Creation" saw themselves as "progressive." They were mostly Democrats, but have allowed Republicans to join so long as they had the proper ideas—especially if they controlled lots of money. They defined themselves by keeping a proper social distance from conservative, and orthodox religious, elements at home and abroad. In short, the American foreign policy class's preoccupation at home has always been to defend itself against what it regards as socially inferior anti-Communist elements. . . . When they struggle with one another they do it by charging each other with being too much like the people they collectively despise—their unsophisticated, anti-Communist, militarist fellow citizens. Praise and rank have come to be associated with a reputation for getting along with us [the Soviets].
>
> All of this, I think, explains their very cohesive, very self-conscious reaction to the series of defeats that American foreign policy has suffered for a generation. Reading their literature one would never guess that America's influence has suffered the kind of decline normally associated with the loss of a major war. They lose military superiority? Kissinger blithely declares, "What in heaven's name does one *do* with military superiority?" We violate a treaty? They scurry to refute anyone who says so, because to say so is to blame them for negotiating badly, and to demand of them moves they do not wish to make. In sum, comrades, they have built a personal stake in the continuation of containment, or peaceful coexistence, in its positive phase. Their narrow class interest just happens to coincide with our broader class interest.

Is this not so? Our foreign policy establishment's claim to authority relies on the fact that, forty years ago, while they were holding a straight flush, Stalin did not use his pair of deuces to call their hand. They use that authority day in, day out, to try to smother with smug contempt other Americans' attempts to stem the Soviets' growing military and geopolitical superiority.

When I contemplate this arrogance, I recall a Soviet official who once replied to my warning that the American people would not stand for violated treaties. He lectured me about the superiority of Marxist class analysis. "The American people might well elect Ronald Reagan," he said, "but we know that nations are not ruled by individuals or by elections, but by classes." Every time I see Armand Hammer's name on a White House guest list, or see one or another of the architects of America's "victories" from the past generation appointed to a post whence he can help bring us more, I am reminded of that lecture. But notwithstanding Alonzo Hamby's tablemates and the attraction they exert on young and old Candidate Members of the Establishment, that establishment cannot continue living on pretense.

—Malcolm Wallop
United States Senator
Washington, D.C.

Alonzo L. Hamby replies:

I regret that Senator Wallop's ego (understuffed, I had assumed) was offended by my attempt at humor in calling him one of a pack of "yelping cubs" that pounced upon the old lions. Let him think of himself as a "young lion." As to the side issue of Comrade Ponomarev's importance, Soviet experts whom I have consulted disagree, but I doubt that any would argue that he occupied a role as central as that of Paul Volcker.

An observer such as myself who wants to encourage a strong, intelligent, bipartisan anti-Soviet foreign policy will find himself in agreement more often than not with Senator Wallop on many specific issues. Yet I found his speech counterproductive in relation to his professed goals.

Made on an occasion honoring George Kennan it seemed notably uncivil and had about the same effect on its audience as a barnyard item in the punchbowl. Its partisanship—and it was partisan despite the Senator's disclaimer—was the sort of thing that Tip O'Neill loves to show wavering Democrats who might otherwise be inclined to find his foreign policy posturings ridiculous. Its major defect, however, was its indifference to historical fact, to the problem of securing consent in a democracy, and to the objective of a foreign policy.

Historical fact. Perhaps the most egregious example is the reference to Stalin's "pair of deuces." Neither in 1945, nor at any point since, has the Soviet Union been a paper teddy bear. In 1945, it possessed a seven million-man army that had driven the Nazis from Stalingrad to Berlin. Yet the Senator, in a fascinating display of the way in which Old Right and Old Left mythologies frequently agree, consistently assumes that the Soviet Union was a pitiful, helpless giant in the postwar world. In the same vein, he smears many Western socialists, bad economists but genuine democrats, by apparently accepting the Soviets' claim that their Leninist totalitarianism is the true representative of international socialism.

The problem of consent. Does the

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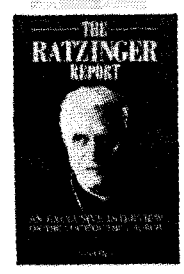

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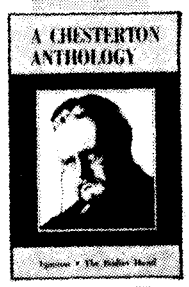

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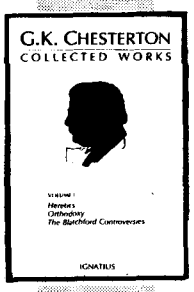

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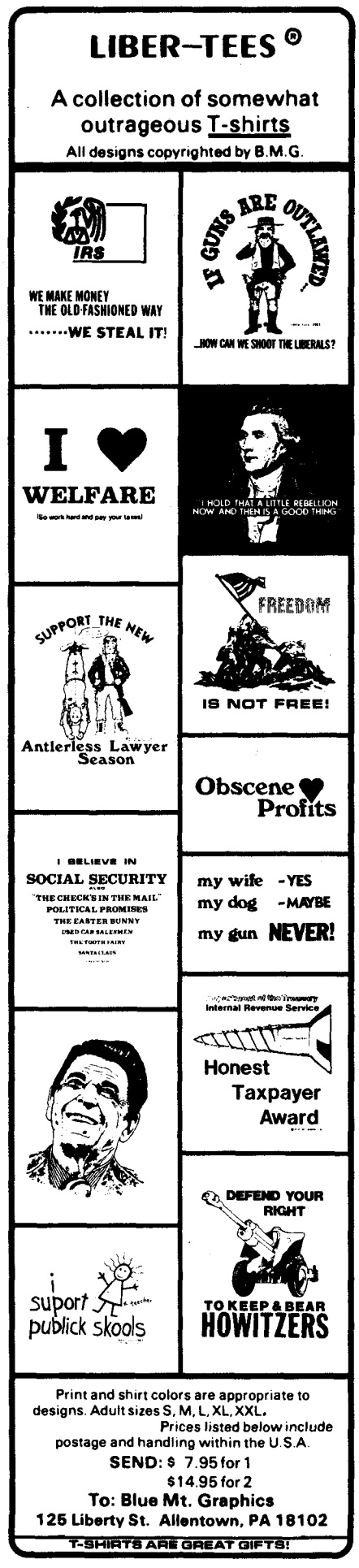
Senator really believe that any administration could have mobilized the American people to threaten war against the Soviet Union over Eastern Europe in 1945, the Hungarian revolution in 1956, or the Berlin Wall in 1961? If his reference to our "straight flush" is a euphemism for our short-lived atomic monopoly, does he think that more than a handful of Americans would ever have favored use of nuclear weapons unless our very survival was at stake? Or does he seriously think that Stalin and his successors would have obligingly acquiesced to our every demand without resistance?

The objectives of a foreign policy. Diplomacy is the means by which a nation sees to its vital interests, not an ideological crusade, however despicable the ideology on the other side; and, though the Senator ignores this point, diplomacy to be credible must be backed by a plausible threat of force. We should wish the peoples of Eastern Europe well, but the region at no point has constituted a vital interest, as does Western Europe or the Caribbean.

We may cherish the dream of a Soviet internal collapse, but we can live in the same world with a USSR that exercises self-restraint in areas important to us. When it does not, we can and should act appropriately; containment need not imply the acceptance of every Russian gain, no matter how important the issue is to us and how peripheral to them. By the same token, it is only prudent to remember that the USSR perceives vital interests of its own, that it is the planet's good fortune that they do not overlap with ours, and that we may do more harm than good by challenging them.

Senator Wallop's Old Right liberationism holds out the possibility of a perfect world; like most such nostrums, whether of the left or the right, it also is dangerously adventuristic. Containment offers a messy, unpleasant world in which our major enemy will continue to exist, stirring up whatever trouble it can for us, and constantly attempting to expand its power and influence. The Senator's vision is less preferable only because it could well entail a pragmatic test of the thus far abstract theory of nuclear winter.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Dartmouth High

Malcolm Gladwell's article "Fast Times at Dartmouth High" (*TAS*, April 1986) misses the entire lesson of the shanties.

When the shanties were constructed on the College Green, a conscious decision was made with the support of the faculty, students, and administration to leave the structures as an expression of opposition to the policies of apartheid. The administration agreed that as long as an educational purpose was served and the business of the College was not disrupted, the shanties could remain. When the condition no longer existed, the administration took steps to remove them. The fact that twelve students attempted to shortcut the process by demolishing the shanties with sledgehammers the day before they were to be removed voluntarily is not a case of mismanagement as you suggested, but rather misconduct.

Preserving the right to dissent and to express one's views is an essential aspect of liberal education. To criticize those who defend the freedom of expression on a college campus and who condemn the use of violence to further one's cause is to lack an appreciation of the qualities that will contribute to roles of positive leadership and citizenship in a pluralistic society.

—David T. McLaughlin
President, Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire

Malcolm Gladwell seems to want to make a career of criticizing the *Dartmouth Review*. He's not the first. There is a natural tendency on the part of the obscure to pick on the famous in order to gain a bit of name recognition. There is also an unhealthy habit among some conservatives to attack their own in order to ingratiate themselves with the liberal establishment.

This seems to be the case with Gladwell. It has come to my attention that he originally submitted his article to the *New Republic*. It was rejected. Poor Gladwell. Even when he flays other conservatives the liberals won't pat him on the head.

Characteristically, Gladwell's article is riddled with errors. He incorrectly spells the name of divestment activist Erik Ness. Then he says that Les Grant is "the first black ever to write for the *Review*," which would surely be news to former editors Anthony Desir and Jon McKinney, not to mention several black staff writers who have contributed to the paper over the years. Gladwell also notes that "today the shanties are gone," apparently unaware that one has been moved to Dartmouth's Hood Museum, and another has been readied for a traveling exhibition to other schools. All this is reminiscent of Gladwell's last article on Dartmouth, a review of Ben Hart's book *Poisoned Ivy*, in which he reeled off a catalog of totally false statistics seeking to prove that Dartmouth was not really an elite school. Poor, poor Gladwell.

What on earth is Gladwell's point? That there are "no adults to be found" at Dartmouth? "Dartmouth High"? This is in contrast, one supposes, to Gladwell's little-known alma mater, where the SAT scores are nothing to speak of, but where, nevertheless, adults are to be found all over the place.

The shanties were taken down at Dartmouth to protest the imposition by a small radical group on the rest of the campus. Building a shack is not "free speech" as the Founding Fathers intended it or by any other reasonable standard. The dean of the college had in mid-November ordered the shanties down, but didn't dare to enforce his decree. So the *Review* students obliged.

Gladwell makes much of the fact that the shanties were abandoned and thus the *Review* played into the hands of the left. But it was precisely *because* the shanties were abandoned that the conservative students felt that they should come down. They no longer served the "educational purpose" which was the college's pretext for allowing them to remain.

The effect of the *Review* on the Dartmouth campus has been anything but counterproductive. Even the *New Republic* admitted that the *Review* "has succeeded where countless tenured professors have failed, in stirring up animated debate on campus." Recently Dartmouth brought back the Reserve Officer Training Corps, banned in the aftermath of Vietnam, in direct and acknowledged response to pressure from the *Dartmouth Review*.

But is Gladwell interested? He just seems to want to attack the *Review* for supposed bad taste and poor judgment. . . .

We all love *The American Spectator* because it appreciates the horselaugh and the outrageous, because it refuses to be pompous and grave all the time, because it realizes that within all of us there is "a child that wants to play," as Nietzsche put it. So why does such a magazine continue to feature so dry and solemn a youngster as Gladwell?

—Laura Anne Ingraham
(Former editor, Dartmouth Review*)*
Washington, D.C.

Malcolm Gladwell replies:
Imagine how surprised I was to read Laura Ingraham's letter. I like the *Dartmouth Review*. I've read it for years. And in the April issue of *TAS* I wrote what I thought was a strong defense of the paper's actions in the recent shantytown incident. I mean, when everyone else was calling the *Review* staffers Nazis, I spent 1500 words blaming the whole affair on the muddleheaded Dartmouth administration. (Which is why, of course, the Dartmouth President took the time from his busy schedule of emoting and empathizing or whatever else he does to write an anguished letter of protest. Laura, see above.)

But Laura Ingraham obviously does not think I am a worthy defender of the *Dartmouth Review*, or perhaps she has so many enemies she does not know a friend when she sees one, or perhaps still she simply does not like me—which is odd because I like her. But then, we've never met and that, I'm sure, has a lot to do with it.

Isn't it strange, for example, that my strongest statement against the Dartmouth administration and faculty—that there are no adults among them—was taken by Miss Ingraham somehow

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to be an attack on the teenaged staff of the *Dartmouth Review*? And consider the curious tale of the fate of my article at the *New Republic*, which seems to serve no purpose above the purely malicious, and to draw attention to the fact that I have written for the *New Republic* and Miss Ingraham has not. I would say something about Miss Ingraham's comments on SAT scores and my own college if I understood them. But I don't. My "little-known alma mater"? What do the 35,000 students at the University of Toronto have to do to get Laura Ingraham's attention? Put up shanties on the Dartmouth green?

What on earth is Laura Ingraham's point? That my article was "riddled with errors"? Really. I didn't say that Les Grant is the "first black ever to write for the *Review*"; I said that he "calls himself the first black ever to write for the *Review*." Which he does. I didn't say that the shanties had disappeared from sight; I said that they were gone from the green. Which they are. Mind you, I did misspell Erik Ness's name. I called him Eric Ness. Oh boy. They took away Janet Cooke's Pulitzer for less.

But there is hope for Laura Ingraham. About two weeks after "Fast Times at Dartmouth High" appeared, I got a call from her boyfriend. Laura was writing a response to my article, he said, and he would like to verify one or two things for her. A few days later, Laura's boyfriend sent me a note: "Here's the letter Laura Ingraham mailed the *Spectator*. I thought you'd like to see it." Then I called the *Spectator*. Was it true that Laura had sent them her letter? No, no, they said, but Laura's boyfriend had.

Now I find that kind of touching. Here we have Laura the bold, defending the honor of the *Dartmouth Review* against attacks both real and imaginary, spouting Nietzsche, stomping all over my article in jackbooted fury, and she still has her boyfriend do the really hard things, like calling me on the telephone and mailing letters to the editor.

Imagine my relief. I had no idea lady-like behavior was on the ideological agenda of the *Dartmouth Review*.

Final Shots

In his rejoinder to my recent letter (Correspondence, *TAS*, April 1985), Mr. James Harkness certainly got one thing right: he didn't change my mind, nor is it likely that I could ever change his. And as to the question of whether the South can provide the model for a racially harmonious society, history will judge whether Willie Morris and I are wishful thinkers or whether Mr. Harkness has despaired too quickly. By the time that verdict is rendered, the three of us will likely be past caring. Nonetheless, certain of his remarks call for some comment. I shall be as brief as I can, after which I shall spike my cannon and move on.

First: All of this prim tut-tutting about the "trajectory" of my language comes with an ill grace from a man who had, *inter alia*, compared the white population of the South to PLO hijackers. If Mr. Harkness wanted civility and temperate discourse, why did he come in swinging? And having done so, what did he expect from those who live in Mississippi? Cases of single-malt Scotch?

Second: In his volcanic summation, Mr. Harkness enumerates various silly opinions he imagines me to hold, and sundry odious moral traits of which I am supposedly the perfect exemplar. Needless to say, none of these actually describe me, but one of them requires a specific protest. Only an ethical quadriplegic would believe that racism and "petty behavior" are moral problems of comparable dimensions. Yet Mr. Harkness imputes that opinion to me, apparently on the strength of my having accused him of "cast[ing] about for instances of petty behavior and for evidence that white racists still exist in Mississippi." From the fact that I had him seeking two things at once, he somehow inferred that I thought them in all respects similar. Had I written that he was looking for a claw hammer and a ham sandwich, no doubt he would have me claiming that both were edible.

Third: I have a certain appreciation for elegant invective, and some of Mr. Harkness's was so good as to defeat its own purpose. It pleased as much as it wounded. He is a *beau sabreur*, and no mistake. Still, in one particular he disappointed me. The gory annals of controversy furnish no precedent for a man being reduced to arguments from his antagonist's middle initials. I had not thought my prowess so great.

And so farewell, brave foeman! May your next journey south leave us both in a better humor.

—Cecil S. H. Ross
Jackson, Mississippi

James Harkness replies:

Ahh, air biscuits. Having launched his attack at the level of "Nyaah, nyaah," Mr. Ross now wants to upgrade to the plastic "elegance" of little Francophile weenie-stabbers. Whether he's a moral quadriplegic or just a resilient Dixiecrat, who's to say? I refer interested readers to his first letter and invite them to decide for themselves the pertinence of my reply, including my comment on his parallelism between racism and "petty behavior." Meanwhile, though it may be (not that it need be) true we'll all be pushing up daisies—or magnolias possibly—before history hands down any verdict on the case at hand, I hope the counsel for the defense will forgive my detection in him, as in other apologists of gradualism North and South alike, a grim, barely clandestine relief that he, at least, won't be around to hear the sentence . . . much less do the time.

BETHELL
(continued from page 13)

said. "One bullet could have changed history. A lot more people would be alive today."

I demurred, taking my cue from *War and Peace* (in which Tolstoy argues that Napoleon is insufficient to explain the Napoleonic Wars). The Russian Revolution was too big an event to attribute to the genius, evil or otherwise, of one man. It would all have happened anyway even if Lenin had been strangled in his crib, let alone shot by Kerensky. We argued about that, just as we argued later about the Richard Pipes (blame it on the Russians) vs. Solzhenitsyn (blame it on Communism) dispute.

We walked the short distance to the Neva River. White ice floes slipped through black water. Across the river was the Peter-and-Paul Fortress where Dostoevsky was imprisoned and, someone said, Bakunin convinced his jailers to become anarchists.

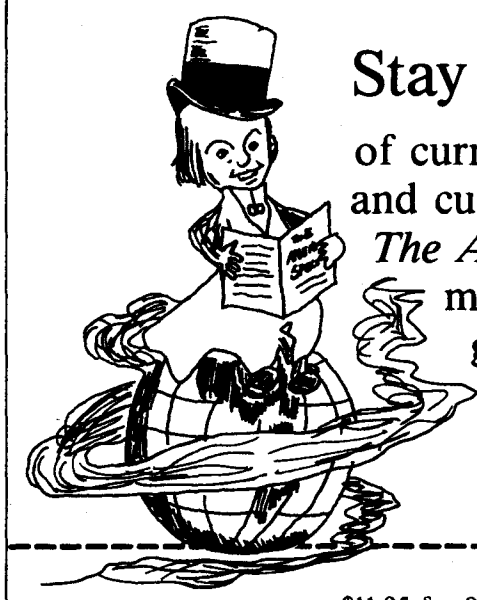
"I'm sorry, but it does have an effect to see this," Beichman said. "Where's the monster? Where's the beast in the belly?"

"Arnold, you've given in already," Richard Grenier said.

"There's the Seine, there's the barges," Brookhiser said.

The next day we went sightseeing on the Intourist bus. The Greniers kept asking Olga to translate the hortatory slogans on top of many buildings. ("The Goals of the 27th Party Congress Must Be Fulfilled!") She seemed not to enjoy furnishing us with these Communist commercial breaks. Overall, our tour was almost completely nonideological. No factories, no collective farms or Museums of Economic Achievement. The Intourist goal seemed to be to minimize the idea of a revolutionary state.

In a way Leningrad is a preservationist's dream. There are many fine eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings in the center of the city (the twentieth-century outskirts are unspeakable) but they badly need fixing up. Some have been repaired and painted, but in general the problem of maintenance far outruns the capacity of a Communist society to cope with it. While one building is restored, ten more deteriorate. Everything looks shabby in socialist countries because in the absence of property rights only top priority things get done (e.g., maintaining the military; putting some food on the table). Sprucing up buildings can never be high on the list. →



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So many old structures have survived because the Communist state scarcely has the surplus energy to tear down old buildings, let alone restore them or put up new ones. For that reason Communist countries look like animated, dilapidated museums—something that has also been observed of Havana. This is so comically at odds with the old idea that Communism represents the future, the "new society," that I found myself wondering anew at the strange persistence of socialist ideology among intellectuals all over the West. *Without their succor, their aid and comfort, above all their faith, this society wouldn't last five minutes*, I found myself thinking several times while in the Soviet Union.

We stepped out for a lunch that was not so great, although the bread was fine.

We clambered back into the bus, to be taken to St. Isaac's Cathedral (man cannot live by bread alone). Beichman said that "tourism, like diplomacy, is easy on the head but hard on the feet." Not bad. St. Isaac's, a Russian Orthodox church not now functioning as such, had been elaborately restored, at considerable expense to the state. The mosaics of Christ and the apostles had clearly been worked on with loving care. It was the same in so many other churches that we visited. We saw so many churches, monasteries, and icons that one might at times have thought it a tour of Holy Mother Russia. As someone remarked, much of what our Intourist guides told us would have been considered "unconstitutional" in the U.S., violating the separation of church and state.

I asked Olga why a Communist state would spend so much money restoring the symbols of Christianity. "Because it is part of our past," she said, "and without the past there will be no future."

As I see it, this is in part an acknowledgment of Communism's failure to produce anything new. Without the things of the past that Communism has chosen not to destroy there would indeed be nothing. Still, the decision of the Party not to eradicate all public traces of Christianity is surprising, considering that Communism is itself an inverted religion, rooted in antagonism to all other religions (but especially Christianity). I believe there are about fifteen functioning churches in Leningrad, and (we were told) forty in Moscow. These churches and their interiors, to say nothing of what takes place inside them, are so much more impressive and beautiful than anything that Communism has produced that one would have thought the contrast subversive; far more unsettling to Communism than anything U.S. tourists might bring into the country with them. But one thing I did notice about the (functioning) churches I visited: There was no written literature available in any of them. No hymn books, prayer books, church bulletins. Everything must be recited from memory. The Communists evidently believe that an aurally transmitted doctrine poses a minimal risk. Their faith in the written word—the hortatory slogan!—is boundless. Hence the Communist devotion to literacy campaigns (as Lenin himself admitted).

That evening we heard a Donizetti opera at the Kirov Theatre. Keeping us up to the historical mark as usual, Beichman reported that S. M. Kirov had been assassinated by Stalin in 1934, thus kicking off the Great Terror. "Stalin always did in his Leningrad bosses," he added as the curtain went up. It was something to keep in mind, certainly. I told him we were about to watch a commie opera. He retorted that that would be enough Red-baiting. As usual at the opera I couldn't follow the action at all and began to doze off, thinking dim thoughts about the ornate dress circle, ornate building, ornate opera, color and pageantry of the old order, in fact very non-Communistic . . .

Someone suggested making a list of the outward and visible signs of a Communist society—queues, slogans, and so on. The absence of pornography was one suggestion. This of course should characterize a Christian society. Another sign today—and one that would have scandalized Lenin—is the Beriozka: the special shop where only hard currency is accepted and from which everyday Russians are excluded. There are many such luxury stores in the Soviet Union today, some for tourists, some for Party officials, and so on. They represent a flagrant breakdown of the Communist ideal: luxuries for the privileged. One might think of this as the Communist equivalent of the sale of indulgences.

This too is subversive. Can reformation be far behind? The ordinary Russian must have noticed by now that specialty shops are patronized by two groups of people: Party officials and foreigners, leading to the reasonable inference that both are equally privileged. The Beriozka tells the perceptive Russian that the Communized masses have nothing to lose but their chains.

Nonetheless, we were exhorted to visit the Beriozka at every opportunity—so that we would leave our dollars behind. The Soviet Union is probably even more "infiltrated" by the market than the U.S. is by power-hungry intellectuals dreaming of a new socialist society. No doubt Gorbachev would like to restore his domain to the pristine Communist state (assuming it ever existed), but there is no way that he can do so. The Party elite will insist on retaining its legal privileges; and beneath them there is the substratum of "corruption": the illegal, underground economy, recently estimated by Vladimir Bukovsky at 30 percent of the total production of goods and services. Party authorities are under relentless "capitalist" pressure to turn a blind eye to such exchanges. If they do so, then prosperity will increase and the people's dependence on Party control will diminish.

It was the consensus of those in our group who had been to the Soviet Union before that the material condition of the Soviet proletariat has noticeably improved in the last decade or so. (And in no country that I have visited is there more conspicuously a proletariat.) There is less waiting in line for essentials, and items such as fresh fruit and vegetables are more readily available. Clothes are brighter and better made.

As a newcomer, nonetheless, my first impression was of the tremendous disparity between the general level of economic development in the Soviet Union and in the U.S. The real Soviet GNP (sometimes said to be about 60 percent of the U.S. level) is undoubtedly a small fraction of ours—perhaps no more than a tenth. That is a pure guess, but there can be no doubt that the official Soviet GNP is greatly overestimated. (In fact, at the recent Party Congress, no GNP statistics were published—the first time this has happened.)

I kept thinking how extraordinary it is that for almost seventy years now the regime has managed to preserve, semi-intact, a materialistic ideology that has so conspicuously failed at the material level. Still, the point is that this is only conspicuous to those with direct experience of a capitalist country. The material condition of the Russian people has slowly improved, after all. As long as they are kept in the dark about conditions in other parts of the world they might reasonably suppose their condition to be normal. All the more reason, then, for their rulers both to undermine capitalism wherever possible, and to limit the proletariat's contact with capitalists.

Before we left Leningrad, Arnold Beichman visited the only synagogue and returned with the gloomy report that the regime had made probably stabilizing concessions in the realm of religious practice. "Keep your nose clean," Beichman said by way of summary, "don't apply to emigrate, don't agitate for Israel, and they'll let you alone." The regime's attitude seemed to be: "Let them eat matzos." Unleavened bread was available for Passover. Kosher arrangements could be made. The observant Jew's requirements had been catered to.

"So why make trouble?" Beichman asked. "Does everyone have to be Shcharansky? It raises the question of what you would do in a totalitarian society. Let's say you've got a wife and a couple of kids. Are you going to be a character witness for someone who has been arrested? What's in it for you?" To fight Communism in New York City during World War II took heroism, he thought. "Still, you weren't going to be sent away for twenty years." In short he didn't believe that Jewish rebellion in the Soviet Union would grow, given the regime's present tolerance of Jewish religious practice.

I had visited the (Polish) Roman Catholic Church that morning and felt much the same way. Don't proselytize, don't make a fuss, and you can probably go to Mass without getting into trouble. (Of course you could not do this if you were a member of the Communist party or wanted to join it.)

I made my own way to the Hermitage Museum, which is inside the Winter Palace. But I never could find Olga and the gang in that vast, baroque maze, so I strolled about on my own. At one point I found myself completely alone in a smallish eighteenth-century room, and to a degree that is unusual in museums was encapsulated in the past: a museum in a historic building in the midst of a city mummified by Communism. There were no museum guards in sight. My feet aching, I sat down in a gilt and velvet chair next to a marble table. Voltaire and his friends might have come in at any moment.

Footsteps! The heavy tread of guards. I looked up with alarm, expecting to be thrown out for breaking the rules. Two soldiers of the Red Army came into the room, squat and bulky both. They took no notice of me as they walked through the gallery, arm in arm. Like a courting couple! But they were obviously confident that their apparent intimacy wouldn't be misconstrued. Unthinkable in this country! I wondered if they would be off soon to Afghanistan, and recalled the cloud of anxiety that crossed the face of the youth on Nevsky Prospekt.

Perhaps the children of Czar Nicholas II played in this very room. I looked out of the window, to see what they would have seen, and there was the Alexander Column, put up in 1832, topped still by the angel holding the cross of Christ. □

(The final part of this article, describing Tbilisi and Moscow, will appear next month.)

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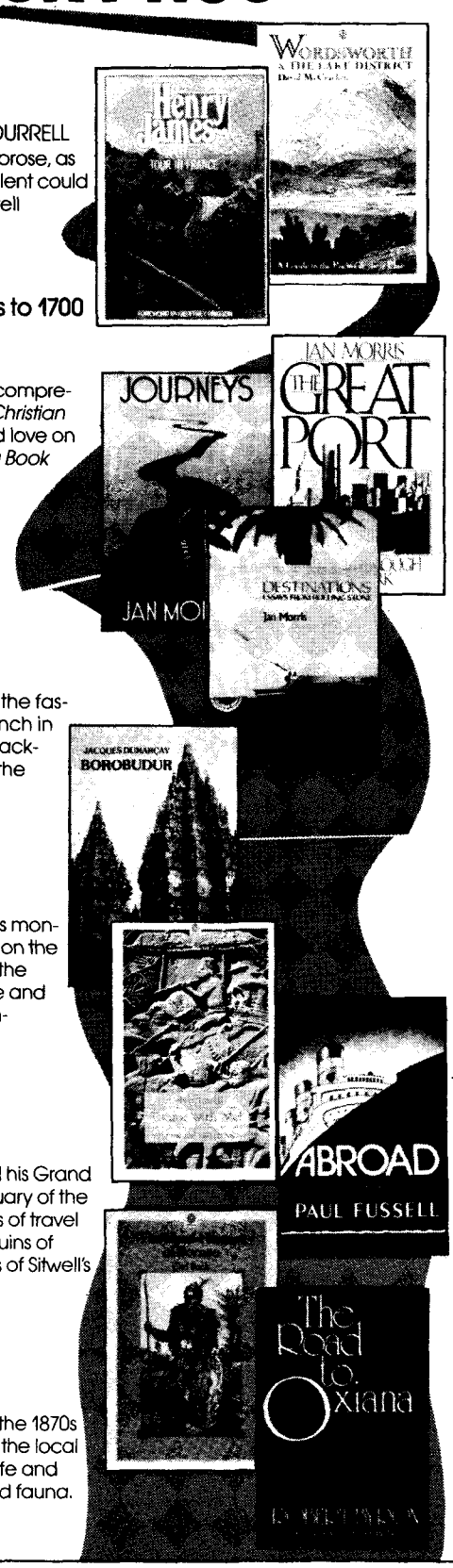

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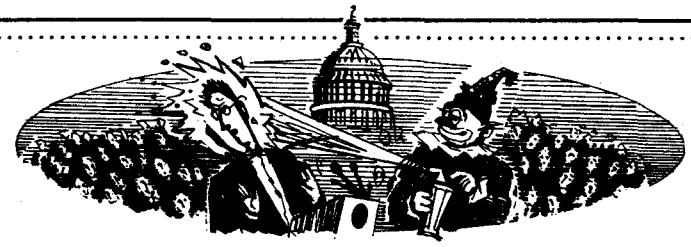


GORI DETAILS

Nine years ago in Kiev a Russian friend said to me, with a shrug, "*Vezde luchshe gdie nas niet*"—verbatim, "Everywhere it's better where we aren't," but which I took as an admission that you're better off to live where there are no (Soviet) Russians. What I failed to appreciate is that you don't have to leave the Soviet Union to see the truth of my interpretation. As I learned in April, you can always travel to (Soviet) Georgia.

• • •

Except don't come until you've had a taste of the real (Soviet) Russia, preferably in the early spring when the ravages of Russian winter nicely complement the ravages of Soviet rule. Try Leningrad, for starters, a sullen ghost town of 5 million dead souls that is fast disappearing in sand and mud. Flying in from Finland you'll first be struck by the chalky, burned-out look of what travel guides call the city's countryside. The Leningrad airport terminal itself hasn't many years left, having been constructed in the middle Brezhnev period. The city's only point of pride is that it was once called St. Petersburg and that some of the architecture from that period hasn't yet crumbled to the extent that it can't be shown to American tourists. There is of course the Hermitage, where on any Sunday you can observe mile-long lines of locals waiting to get inside for a glimpse of the West through its art. Other than that, there really is little to see in Leningrad, and even less light to see it with (this includes the blacked-out restaurants in which Intourist will have you fed). In Leningrad you will understand why Dostoevsky found the area's white nights a source of endless gloom.

• • •

Then one evening you are landing in Tbilisi (the Georgian capital). Something is immediately wrong. The place is aglow and even its Mediterranean-like mountains seem to refract in the sky. Coming in from the airport you are stunned by the number of private cars zipping along brightly lit avenues (under a street lamp two children are playing a netless game of badminton). These cars come in all colors and many of them have whitewalls, that ultimate tribute to private ownership. Better still, a major statue or two of Lenin notwithstanding, you see no Russians. (Recent figures have them comprising less than 9 percent of Georgia's population, which seems generous.) From what you notice in your short time there and from what you read and hear when you get back, the conclusion is inescapable: these people are left alone.

• • •

Not in all things, obviously. The fact that every Georgian knows Russian tells all you need to know about who calls the shots. But unlike the Soviet Russians, Georgians have the wherewithal to make the best of a bad situation. Their language, culture, and history predate Muscovy's by centuries, and just as important they have never been isolated from the spirit of enterprise. While the Russian sits back and whines about his unique Slavic soul, the Georgian is out making deals and pretending to be free. The Russian pays him the highest compliment by holding his kind in ill-disguised contempt. "For the Georgian is the Russian's antithesis," English traveler Colin Thubron remarked a few years ago. "He has a hugely heightened sense of self. He behaves not as a part, but as the epicentre of things. Before the Revolution, one in seven men on the streets of Tbilisi was rumoured to be a prince."

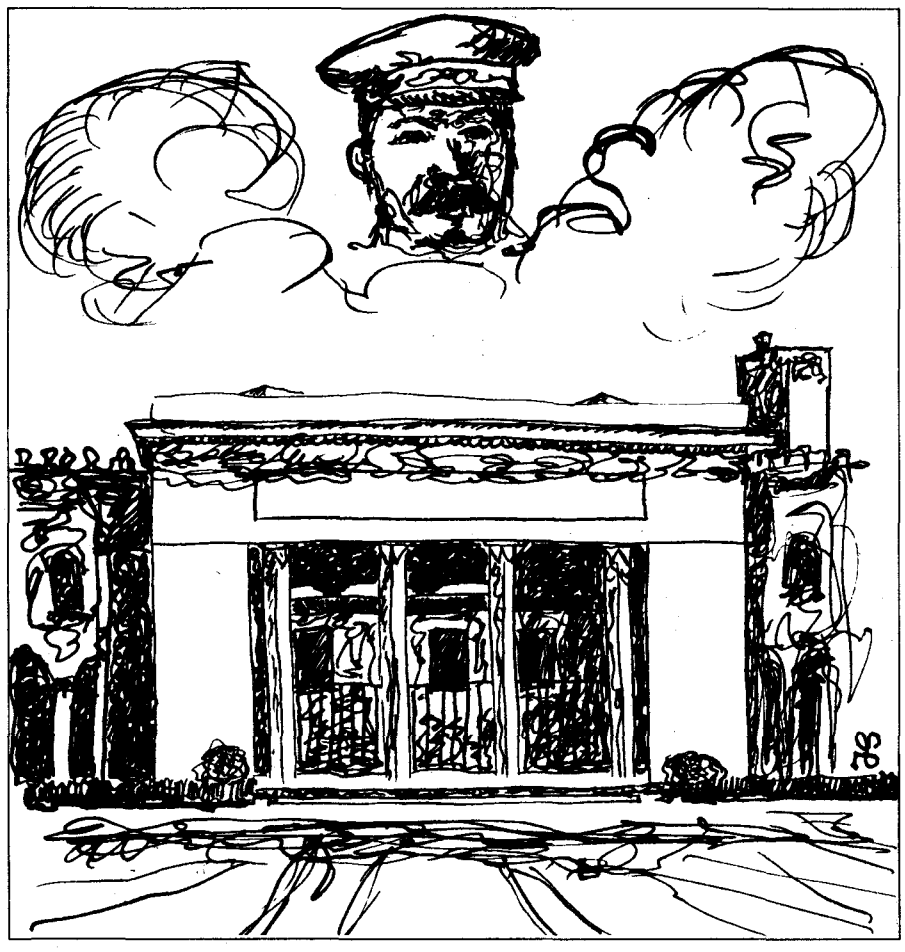
• • •

In this light it's hard to know what to make of Georgia's unusual if overblown devotion to the memory of favorite son Joseph Stalin. Throughout Georgia major streets are still named after him, his figure appears on the bas-relief of a few buildings, and his picture hangs inside museums of Marxism-Leninism. The center of the Stalin cult is the town of Gori (35 miles northwest of Tbilisi), Stalin's birthplace and the site of the only public statue of Stalin and Stalin museum this side of Albania. Speaking in Russian the enthusiastic Georgian curator of the museum tells my group: "I'm very happy you've come to pay tribute to our Stalin." Our Georgian guide, evidently embarrassed, translates this into "I'm very happy you're here." But there's no denying our curator's devotion to her subject. She is particularly loving in her comments on the young Stalin: a "poetic" child, with a "velvety" singing voice and "beautiful" looks. Such trifles aside, there's nothing in the museum's five rooms that doesn't correspond to the official Soviet line: absolute praise for industrialization, collectivization, and Stalin's wartime leadership—and not a hint of Trotsky, famine, deportation, purges, or Ribbentrop-Molotov. One myth has it that Georgians like Stalin because he went easy on them, another because he killed more Russians than Georgians. For my part, I think they like him because they are free not to take him seriously. And so I am amused that someone let the following slip through, a description of Stalin by some obscure Bolshevik that accompanies one of the few entries at the Gori museum from the 1930s. Let me translate: "Stalin couldn't stand fussiness. When he made a decision, he would say so [and] instruct [that it be carried out]—it had to be carried out exactly on time, without any delay. And everyone around him knew this." Is this what the Russians called "cult of personality"?

• • •

In Moscow a few days later I observe official celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the first flight in space by man—who happened to be a Soviet Russian, Yuri Gagarin. Not a word, though, that Yuri is no longer among the living, nor that his flight took place during the glory of Nikita Khrushchev. Instead I get a live hook-up with two cosmonauts who've been circling the earth for some time now. A teenager-in-the-street asks them what they think about "Reagan's star wars." The commander answers: "You know, we've flown over the U.S. many times now. Let me tell you, it's a very nice country from up here—but it's not as big as the people living there think it is." Suddenly I wish I were back in Tbilisi.—*WP*

George Jean Nathan has gone to Club Med to peddle influence. He will resume this column next month.



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CURRENT WISDOM

Royal British Legion Newsletter

The pursuit of perfect justice as witnessed in bucolic Nigeria by the eyes and ears of Her Majesty the Queen:

Following a visit of Nigeria's State Environmental Task Force to Dr. Owonifari Atanlogun's hospital at Ekun Elegeru, Mr. J. A. Oye discovered that four female lunatics had become pregnant.

"Dr. Atanlogun was given £10,000 to rid the State capital of lunatics," said Mr. Oye, "and now we discover this. . . . Furthermore, when the SETF continued to criticise him, he said he would release the 78 lunatics he had already arrested. The Doctor must learn that he cannot play upon our intelligence in this way. He has, so we are informed, arrested no more than 30 lunatics for a retainer of £8,500. And when asked how he knew they were lunatics, he said: 'They objected most strongly to being locked up. That is always a sign.' Evidently the Doctor thinks he is dealing with fools."

Replying to these words, Dr. Atanlogun said: "I was promised £1,000 per lunatic. I am ruining myself feeding them. As for the female lunatics, I agree they are pregnant, but they were pregnant before they reached the hospital. They all signed statements to that effect. And I shall release them outside the SETF's headquarters."

[March 1986]

Utne Reader

The bold thoughts of Dr. Gordon Murray, gathered up and dumped upon the pages of a fabled refuse heap:

The liberation of gay men touches all men, and indeed the well-being of the planet. As long as there is a bias against lovingly expressing the male bond, there will be a tendency to act it out only in contexts where traditional "masculine" values such as competitiveness, power and violence dominate.

We must dare to see the gay man not as "other" but as part of every man. We must dare to teach our male children that it's all right to care for other boys. We must dare to confront the men who aim lethal nuclear phalluses at other men, and insist they learn to make love, not war.

—Gordon Murray
[May 1986]

In These Times

Belles lettres as perpetrated by a gifted editorialist at the enlightened ITT:

Even so, in Congress, in the media and among neoliberals and a few simpleton leftists, the idea that the Soviet Union is a menace, and that it is insidiously spreading both its power and its evil ideology—in this case through Nicaragua—remains prevalent. And the corollary that it is our duty to defend the world against this menace is unthinkingly accepted as an operating premise for foreign and military policy.

This is the rock on which Reaganism stands. But it is an old rock that the winds of this century have turned to sand.

[March 26-April 1, 1986]

Wisconsin State Journal

Ardelle goes native in the libertarian USSR:

When the Soviet Peace Committee invited Ardelle Hough to spend a week in mid-December with them in Moscow, she figured she knew what to expect.

As vice president of the United States section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, this Middleton woman knows a good deal about the Soviet Union; even so, she said, she harbored illusions about the Soviet people—illusions that were dispelled by her visit.

"Anti-Communism is really an insidious thing," she said. "You have all these illusions that (the Soviets) are gray, drab people, and that's simply not true." . . .

She said she never experienced anything but kindness from the Soviet people, and never felt she was being watched by the government. "They are compassionate people, and completely without guile," she said, also describing them as "open and honest." . . .

On Soviet treatment of dissidents, Mrs. Hough said, "This is the way they've chosen to make their government. Who are we to judge?" She described Andrei Sakharov's exile to Gorky "like being exiled to Miami." . . .

She believes popular involvement in the United States peace movement doesn't compare to that in the Soviet Union.

"There is not the consensus in this country that there is in the Soviet Union for an end to the arms race," she said, adding that the Soviets recently announced a continuation of their moratorium on nuclear-weapons testing while the United States government has refused to implement such a ban.

"The Soviets do understand what the peace movement is up against in this country," she said, "but that doesn't let us off the hook."

[March 3, 1986]

Ms.

Marc and Judith Meshorer, sex *philosophes* and authors of *Ultimate Pleasure: The Secrets of Easily Orgasmic Women*, excite the cerebrations of Sarah Crichton in the pages of an old favorite:

•*Meshorer Moral Number 2*: If you don't make yourself responsible for your own orgasm, nobody else will do it for you, nobody else can.

"It seems obvious," says Marc Meshorer, "that this is a normal response, it's in the body, it's in nature. It's not something you either got or you don't—it's something you learn to get in touch with, to free. Some women catch on real quickly, and some are helped by a very important partner, a key partner. But a partner can't train a woman: a woman has to train herself, and sometimes that takes time. It took one woman we interviewed 28 years and three divorces before she became consistently orgasmic. Now she regularly has dozens."

[May 1986]

Washington Times

In the venerable "Dear Abby" column ithyphallic poetry for the obese:

Dear Abby: I read in your column about a man who was "turned off" because his wife was fat. How I pity his wife because of his selfishness, his lack of insight and love!

My wife is fat. So am I. We love each other. When I look at her, I do not see a fat old lady; I see a nymph on the beach in the moonlight. I shed my clothes and chase her. In close embrace we drop to the moist sand. With morning, we arrange our clothes and meet the day.

One night soon now we will drop naked to the sand—but we will not stir with the morning light. Our children will arrange our clothes and spade the moist sand. Our love will stay with our children. We will be with the sun.

—Two Tubbies in Marion, Ill.
[March 25, 1986]

New Republic

An inscrutable communiqué from art critic Robert Hughes:

All the protest art of the sixties and seventies could not save a single Cambodian from Nixon and Kissinger, let alone Pol Pot.

[April 14, 1986]

Twin Cities Reader

The promising ratiocinations of a Midwestern Aristotle:

As we hold our breath waiting for the medical field to find a scientific means of curing AIDS and watch many more innocent people die, perhaps we should look in the mirror and ask ourselves if we are to blame.

Just maybe, we in society who are selfishly judging the lifestyles of others because of our insecurities and self-righteous attitudes are responsible for creating symptoms of our own problem, such as AIDS, alcoholism, suicide, divorce and drug addiction.

Perhaps the problem is that we make people feel so insecure and afraid of our opinions that they cannot be honest with society and reveal their hidden needs.

Perhaps we suppress that "All-American" captain of a high school football team into the "closet" because of our sardonic remarks. Perhaps if we could have judged him by his individual character, rather than by stereotyped, prejudiced beliefs, he would not have chosen a gay bar or bathhouse as a way to open the "closet door" for release of internal pressure. . . .

Maybe we could prevent these tragedies and heal some of society's symptoms by letting children grow as individuals, allowing them to express their needs. If we can give just a little guidance, acceptance and support to children at a younger age, perhaps they wouldn't become another symptom of our society.

—Leon Pick
Edina
[March 19, 1986]

Daily Appellate Report

Memorabilia from a historic day in a California court:

MODIFICATION

Cite as 86 Daily Journal D.A.R. 932

THE PEOPLE,
Plaintiff-Respondent,
v.
Glen Roger Wilcox,
Defendant-Appellant,
2d Crim. No. B007267
Super. Ct. No. CR18768
California Court of Appeal
Second Appellate District
Division Six
Filed March 12, 1986

THE COURT:

It is ordered that the opinion filed herein on February 18, 1986, be modified in the following particular:

1. On page 3, add to the full paragraph as a last sentence:

Although different organs may be used for sexual purposes, that does not make them sexual organs.

The petition for rehearing is denied.

[March 26, 1986]

New York Times

In the wake of the U.S. bombing of a leading terrorist state the Hon. Weicker tumefies and heaves off yet one more discourse on the moral theory of a popinjay:

Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., a Connecticut Republican, said the military attack was "no different than what Qaddafi had done" in mounting terrorist operations against Americans. "I don't want the United States at that level," he said.

[April 16, 1986]

Washington Post

Even more echolalic blather from the Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.:

Biden quotes from John and Robert F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and declares: "They made me reach beyond myself. They made me feel good about myself and my party. . . . And I think it's time for us as Democrats to touch the soul of the country again. And to challenge it. Not be afraid of it. Lift it up, with a soaring and singing sensation. The sunrise of a new day. My fellow Democrats, it's time to restore America's hope again, time to be on the march again. Put very simply, it's time to get America moving again. Let us begin. Our time has come."

[March 3, 1986]

Wall Street Journal

Another inaccurate pronunciamento from Dr. Alexander Cockburn:

In the face of the negligible threat posed to U.S. interests—and to the world—by Muammar Qaddafi we now witness the U.S. tossing aside elementary dictates of law, evidence, morality, compassion, common sense, logic, self-interest and proportion; all discarded in a gust of national self-congratulation.

[April 17, 1986]

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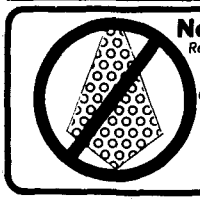

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Dave Repp

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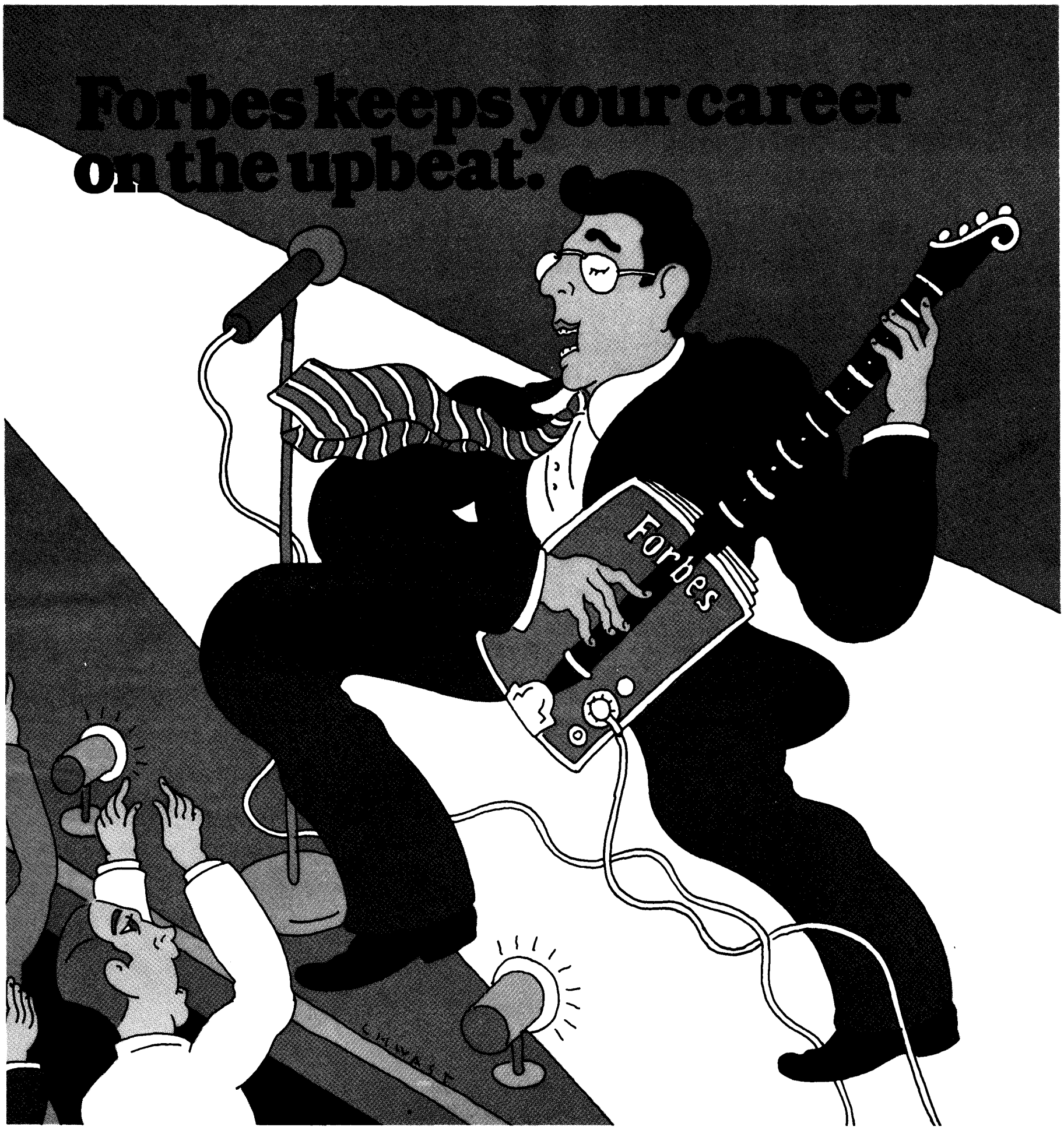

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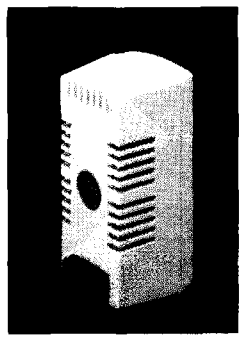

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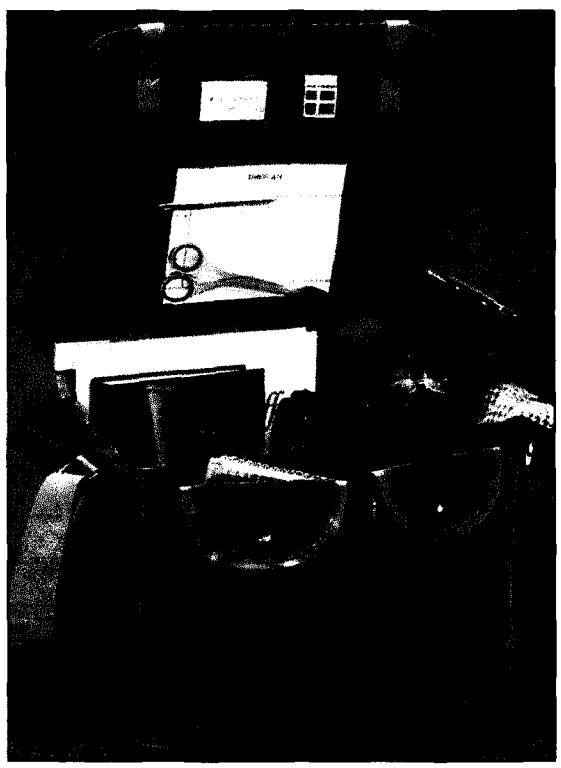

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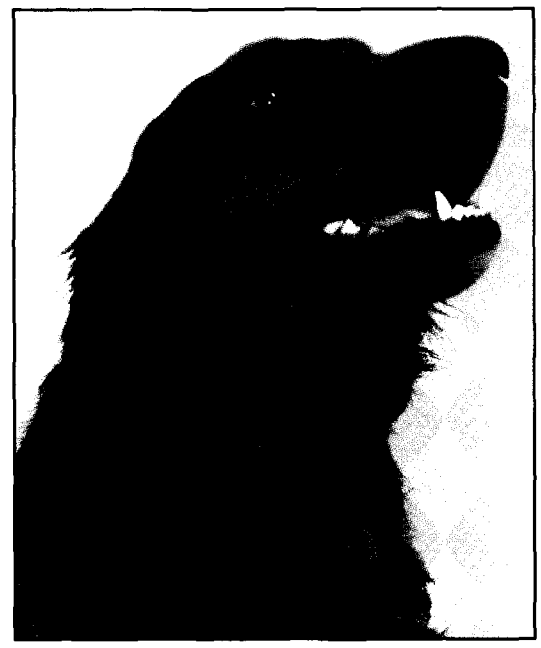

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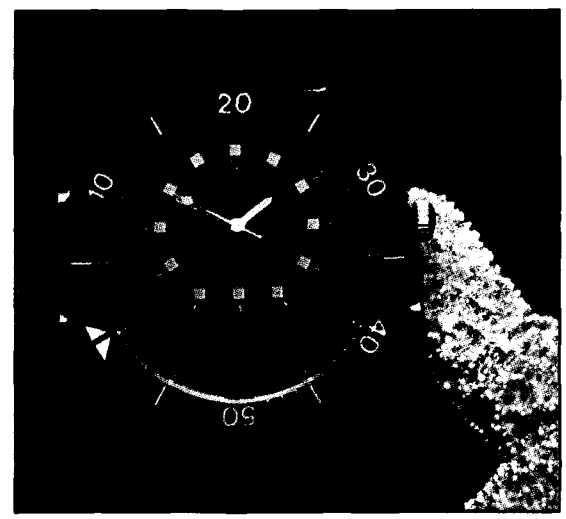

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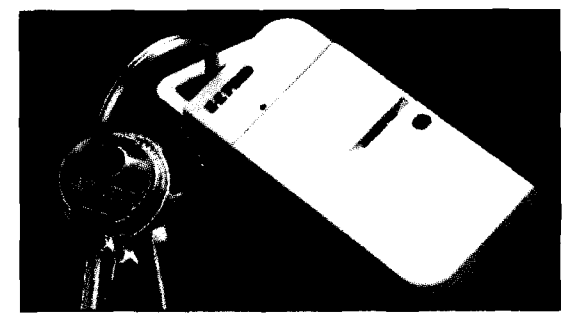

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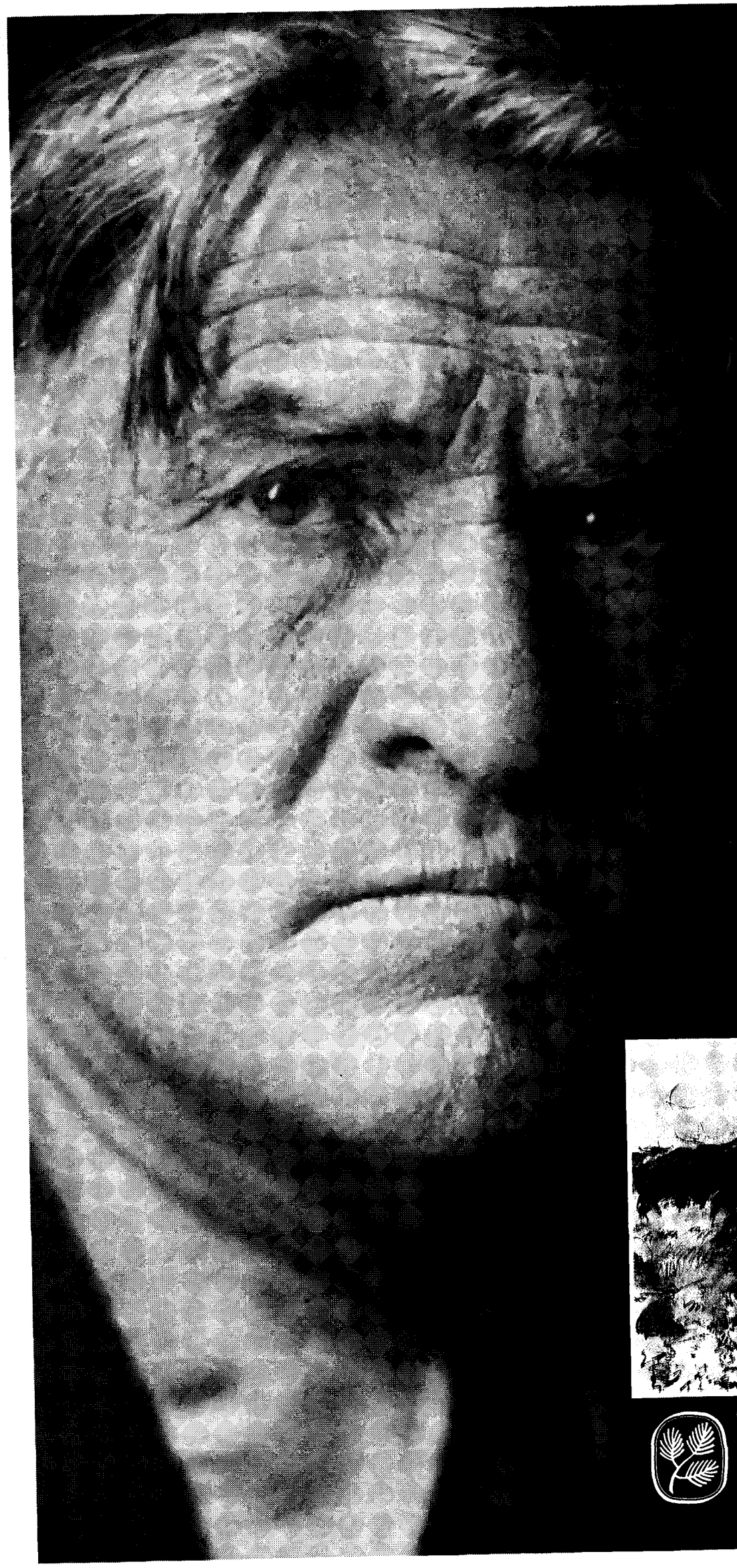

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